AN

ORIGINAL CHURCH OF CHRIST:

OR,

A SCRIPTURAL VINDICATION

OF THE

ORDERS AND POWERS OF THE MINISTRY

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY NATHAN BANGS, D. D.

I WILL ALSO MAKE THY OFFICERS PEACE, AND THINE EXACTORS RIGHTEOUSNESS.—Isaiah lx. 17.

Καταςησω τους επισκοπους αυτων εν δικαιοσυνη, τους διακονους εν πιςει.—St. Clement.

Translation—I WILL APPOINT THINE OVERSEERS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THY DEACONS IN FAITH.

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PREFACE.

WHILE travelling the Niagara circuit, in Upper Canada, in the latter part of the year 1804, as a colleague with the Rev. Daniel Pickett, a discussion incidentally arose between him and a minister of the Church of England, on the validity of our ordination. Some letters passed between them in reference to this subject, in one of which, from the clergyman of the Establishment, it was asked, "If Dr. Coke were satisfied with the validity of his ordination, why did he apply to the house of bishops, in the United States, for a reconsecration?" This question disclosed a fact of which we were both ignorant, and of course could not reply to it. The next spring, while attending the conference in the city of New-York, the subject was mentioned to Bishop Asbury, who explained to us the whole transaction which passed between Dr. Coke and Bishops White and Seabury; and, at the same time, expressed his regret that Dr. Coke had so precipitately committed himself in this affair. Here the matter ended for that time.

This circumstance, however, awakened my mind to the subject, and led me to make inquiries respecting the authorities on which Mr. Wesley and others depended for a justification of their proceedings in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Being young in the ministry, as well as in years, and

my time wholly taken up in travelling and preaching in the new settlements of Upper Canada, where there were but few books beside the Bible, and having neither the means to purchase nor the time to examine them, but little progress was made in this important inquiry for several years. In the meantime, it was frequently sounded in my ears, that the Methodists were interlopers, that their ministerial orders were spurious, and that the ordinances of the Lord's supper and baptism, as administered by them, were desecrated, by passing through unconsecrated hands. These reproaches were not merely the expressions of thoughtless minds in convivial conversations, but were gravely asserted in print, particularly by Protestant Episcopal writers, and more especially in the Churchman's Magazine.

In the year 1809, while travelling on the Albany circuit, being in company with a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church, our conversation turned upon the subject of the validity of our ordination, and having expressed a wish to be better informed on this topic—for, indeed, neither of us seemed prepared to discuss it with much accuracy or depth of thought—he said that he would put a book into my hands, which would, he thought, give me the needed information. This was none other than "An Inquiry into the validity of Methodist Episcopacy," by N. L., who was supposed to be *Mr. Kewley*, an apostate from Methodism. On looking at the title, I told my clerical friend that I would read it, on condition that he would read an answer to it, which I had in my possession, written by a gentleman calling himself, *Armageddon*. To this he assented, and we parted with mutual good will toward each other; and those who are acquainted

with these respective authors, will naturally conclude that neither of us could be much enlightened or edified; for neither argument nor brotherly love was exemplified by the one or the other; the latter, especially, deals in dogmatisms as course and disgusting, as the former does in smooth sophistry and refined arrogance.*

Without entering into a more minute detail of the process through which my mind passed in the investigation of this intricate and long-vexed question, I will remark, that I greedily read every thing I could find which had a bearing on the subject, whether written by friends or enemies, as well as those whose writings, on account of their antiquity, could have had no immediate reference to the question in dispute between us and the Protestant Episcopalians; and being fully convinced, from as diligent an inquiry as I could make—and I had many temptations to induce me to arrive at a contrary result—I at length embodied my thoughts in a little volume, which was published under the sanction of the Book Committee, at our Book Room, in 1820, under the following title:—

"A VINDICATION OF METHODIST EPISCOPACY."

In the preliminary observations to that imperfect sketch, the following reasons were assigned for the publication, which, as they will apply with equal force

* I have been informed, and I believe correctly, that Mr. Kewley gave evidence of the consistency of his faith, by going first to the Protestant Episcopal Church, then to the Roman Catholic, and finally, that he might "prove all things, and hold fast that which" he esteemed the best, he turned a Jew, received circumcision, and was admitted to the synagogue; but whether as a priest or not I am unable to say. How many others would follow his footsteps were they to carry out their principles into full practice!

and propriety at the present time, are adopted, with some slight verbal alterations, as a part of the present preface.

"Perhaps there are few subjects of a religious nature involved in greater obscurity, and which have occasioned sharper disputes, than the question, *What was the primitive mode of church government?* Its obscurity, indeed, affords a very obvious reason why ecclesiastical writers have been so much divided concerning it;—for those truths which are expressly revealed as articles of faith, or may be easily deduced from given principles, do not so readily admit of controversy; and, therefore, respecting all such, Christians are more generally agreed.

"If we had a systematical draft of the primitive church in the Sacred Scriptures, with specific reference to the order and manner of consecrating her ministers, the particular mode of her government, &c., we might determine, with greater precision, on this important question; but we are left to form our judgment upon these points from insulated passages of Scripture, used by the writer for other purposes than to prove any particular mode of church government, from historical narratives, and from incidental circumstances. This imperfect manner in which the order of the church is sketched out in the Holy Scriptures, affords no small proof that no specific mode is essential to constitute an evangelical church; otherwise the Holy Ghost would doubtless have left us full information respecting the exact manner of organizing the church, and the official duties of her ministers.

"The agitated state of the Christian world in relation to this subject, originating not only from the causes already noticed, but also from the prejudice

of education, and the different usages which have obtained among the several denominations into which the Christian world is divided, renders it somewhat difficult to settle the present question satisfactorily. Nothing, indeed, is more common than for each community of Christians to make their own established forms of church government a medium of Scripture interpretation upon this subject; and to establish their point, they bring to their aid a huge mass of testimony, collected from the uncertain traditions of the church. Thus, no sooner does a Protestant Episcopalian read the word bishop, than his imagination beholds a modern diocesan, having ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a specified number of parishes and of parish ministers. A Presbyterian or a Congregationalist thinks he sees the pastor of a single congregation, officiating at stated times, according to a mutual contract between him and his people. A Roman Catholic, with loftier look than either of the former, recognizes, whenever he reads of Peter or Paul, *a pope*, seated in splendid opulence, surrounded with his twelve cardinals, and holding an infallible jurisdiction over the judgments and consciences of all his clergy and people. In this manner, each, looking through the glass of his own church establishment, views as many different modes of church government, as there are different orders of professing Christians.

"In the midst of such jarring sentiments, on a subject rendered more obscure and perplexing still, by the manner in which it has been handled by some writers, it cannot be reasonably expected that demonstration will accompany our inquiries. Divesting ourselves, however, as far as possible, of prejudice and prepossession, let us approach the subject with that

calmness and deliberation which ought ever to accompany us in the investigation of truth, and with that diffidence which becomes dependent and fallible creatures.

"This inquiry is entered upon at present, for the following reasons:—

"1. It has frequently been asserted, especially by the Protestant Episcopal Church, that, whatever right we may have to preach the gospel, we have no authority to administer the ordinances of Christianity, because we have not received a valid ordination. This specious objection it seems necessary to obviate. Let it be recollected, however, that while our own ministry is vindicated from what we consider a false aspersion, we pretend not to call in question the authority of other churches. Were it practicable, we would gladly avoid all animadversions on any other Christian community, and present the question unembarrassed with controversy; but the rude manner in which we have been assailed upon this point, by some who set up an exclusive claim to a valid ministry, by virtue of an uninterrupted succession of bishops superior to elders, from the apostles' days, makes it necessary to notice some of their arguments. This, however, shall be done in as inoffensive a way as the nature of the subject will admit; being desirous to give needless pain to no one; much less to unchristian them, by calling in question the authority of their ministers, or the validity of their ordinances. For the reasons already assigned, ecclesiastical writers, who investigate this subject, ought to evince a spirit of forbearance towards each other. Were an exact archetype of the Christian church, as it relates to her ministerial orders and functions, found in the Holy Scriptures, we could

speak with less diffidence, and pronounce with greater certainty. But, without presuming to condemn others, we think we have sufficient authority from the Scriptures of truth, and from the usages of the primitive church, to do as we have done, and as we still continue to do.

"It is certainly matter of no small consequence to ascertain whether all the persons baptized by us and others not belonging to the Protestant Episcopalians, were legally baptized or not,—whether all those who receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper at our hands, are guilty of partaking of unconsecrated bread and wine,—and whether all those ministers who honestly dissent from them in respect to the divine right of episcopacy, are intruders into the sacred office. The sweeping arguments used by our antagonists upon this subject, spread wide desolation among the churches not under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction. From the unhappy consequences resulting from such comprehensive assertions, as go to exclude all others from the right of administering the ordinances of Christ, we think we are bound in conscience to exempt ourselves, because we think it a matter of high importance to justify a practice so intimately connected with the present and future happiness of immortal souls.

"2. This is the more necessary, because there are very many among us, who not having made this subject a matter of study, are at a loss for arguments of self-defence when assailed by those who endeavour to shake their faith. For the purpose of confirming the faith of all such, an analogy between our own and the primitive church has been attempted.

"3. There are others to whom we are little known.

They may have heard of us by the hearing of the ear, and perhaps the reports have generally been unfavourable. To rectify the mistakes of all such, they are herein presented with a concise, though, I trust, impartial view, of the manner in which our ministers are called, educated, consecrated, and governed. They will thus be able to judge for themselves respecting the authority of our ministry, and the validity of our ordinances.

"4. In accomplishing the object we contemplated, it has been found necessary to take a short and comprehensive view of the state of the church from the days of the apostles to the present time, and to glance at the opinions of some of the most eminent divines at the memorable era of the reformation from popery. This mode of investigation, though somewhat prolix and perplexing, is needful to enable us to behold the source of those corruptions whence have generated the noxious weeds of error in doctrine, and those impure streams in practice, which have at times infected and polluted the church. It will be seen, with painful emotions, that pride and ambition prompted those of them who had become eminent by their talents, to exercise a lordly dominion over their inferiors, and to extend their clerical jurisdiction beyond the bounds originally prescribed them by Christ and his apostles. Having once gained the ascendency, so far from suffering a diminution of their power and authority, they sought every opportunity to augment and strengthen it. In vain, therefore, may we seek for a primitive model of the church in the writings of the fathers, especially after the close of the third century of the Christian era. In the course of this investigation, therefore, we hope to derive some assistance

from the early history of the church, reminding ourselves, in the meantime, of the fallibility of ecclesiastical writers, upon this as well as upon all other subjects. When we take leave of the inspired writers, we no longer have an infallible guide.

"To the Scriptures, therefore, we must make our ultimate appeal, upon this as well as upon all other subjects of an ecclesiastical nature. So far as they lend us their infallible light, and we suffer ourselves to be guided by it, we shall not be led astray."

After maturing the subject, and still consulting those authors which have fallen in my way for seventeen years, the time which has elapsed since that publication, I have seen no cause to alter the views therein expressed, except perhaps in one single instance respecting those who were the successors of the evangelists, and the manner in which the name bishop, and the episcopal office, were substituted for those eminent primitive superintendents of the church. And as the principal arguments used in that little book, as well as the testimonies from the sacred Scriptures, and the primitive fathers, though much enlarged and amplified, are embraced in this volume, it is hereby cancelled, as the reader who possesses *this* will have substantially, and I hope, somewhat improved, all which was contained in *that*.

As to the present performance, it must speak for itself. When I commenced writing, I had not the most distant thought of pursuing the present subject to such a length. Seeing one day among the exchange papers which visit the office of the Christian Advocate and Journal, the communication in the "Churchman," a weekly religious paper published under the patronage of Bishop Onderdonk, in the city of New-York, which

originally appeared in the "Gambier Observer," a kindred publication issued under a similar patronage by the bishop of Ohio, I felt it a duty to make some remarks upon it, intending at the time to write two or three short numbers only, with a view simply to ward off the blow which the writer had aimed at our church, and there let the matter rest. Finding, however, as I proceeded, that the subject opened before me, that one thought suggested another; and knowing also that high pretensions had recently been put forth by other writers in the same communion, in favour of their exclusive right to a valid ministry; and being, moreover, assured from some of my personal friends, that the discussion was loudly called for, and was likely to be productive of good to the church; I laid aside my own scruples in respect to the propriety of pursuing the discussion, being fully convinced that I was in the path of duty in exerting myself to do the subject justice, and to sift the question, as far as I was able, to the bottom. The result is before the reader—and he must judge of it in the light of scriptural and rational evidence, as he should of all other human performances, with an impartial regard to truth, and a suitable allowance for the common frailties of our nature, and the imperfections of human judgment. If an honest intention to ascertain and follow the truth should shield me from the severity of criticism, and the harshness of censure, I am sure the work will be treated with that fairness and candour which alone will entitle any objections which may be made to a respectful notice.

That which mainly led to the publication of these numbers in a volume, has been the frequent calls for them to appear in this form, both from private cor-

respondents, whose names, I am sure, were I allowed to mention them, would greatly recommend the work; and from several of our weekly papers; but more especially by the unanimous votes of four of our annual conferences, namely, Baltimore, New-York, New-England, and Troy, the resolutions of which, except that of the Troy Conference, which has not come to hand, will be found below.*

In preparing these numbers for the press in this more permanent form, they have undergone a thorough revision, one entire number has been added, several notes appended, whole paragraphs and sentences modified, numerous verbal corrections have been made, and the whole subjected to that rigid scrutiny—availing myself of any suggestions which I have either seen or heard from friends or those who are more especially opposed to the theory I have adopted—which was deemed necessary to secure them, as far as

* RESOLUTION OF THE BALTIMORE CONFERENCE.

Resolved,—That in view of the much agitated controversy on the subject of Episcopacy, this Conference respectfully recommend to the Book Committee at New-York, to publish, in a bound volume, the articles published in the Christian Advocate and Journal, signed "Ecclesia."

RESOLUTION OF THE NEW-YORK CONFERENCE.

Resolved,—That the Book Agents be requested, with the consent of the author, to publish the numbers of "Ecclesia," which have appeared in the Christian Advocate and Journal, in the form of a book.

RESOLUTION OF THE NEW-ENGLAND CONFERENCE.

Resolved,—That this Conference request that the writer of the articles now publishing in the Christian Advocate and Journal, entitled, "Original Church of Christ," issue them in the form of a book, when he shall have finished the numbers, esteeming them an able defence of the validity and scriptural character of our ordinations.

possible, from errors, either in doctrine, argument, or testimony. But I have had too much experience in passing works through the press, to flatter myself that the present volume will be free from blemish, either as to style or typographical execution—though, if it be not correct, it will not be for want of care and labour to make it so.

As this volume first appeared in the form of numbers in the Christian Advocate and Journal, and as each number generally contains a complete thought in itself, it has been judged most advisable to let them remain under this denomination, instead of a more formal division into chapters and sections, having prefixed, however, a summary of contents at the head of each number.

I have nothing more to add, than my most fervent prayers that the Divine Head of the church may, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, accompany this imperfect effort to defend what I believe to be His truth, with his blessing to the heart of every reader, to his edification in holiness, and to his steadfastness in the faith, that he may finally attain to everlasting life.

N. BANGS.

New-York, June 28, 1837.

AN

ORIGINAL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

NUMBER I.

The occasion of this discussion deprecated—Points of difference between the Protestant Episcopal and primitive churches—A lay head unscriptural—Ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church restricted by their commission—This contrary to primitive usage—Apology for this discussion.

"The Protestant Episcopal Church is an original Church of Christ. The Methodist society is not, as they have separated from the Church of England, without having, in the judgment of that Church, a valid ministry."

So says a writer in the Gambier Observer, who signs himself, *Pro Ecclesia*, and whose object appears to be to prove that Methodist ministers ought not to be admitted to the pulpits of the Protestant Episcopal churches. I had hoped that the age of bigotry was fast passing away, and that it would soon be succeeded by a spirit of liberality, which might lead to that feeling of reciprocal friendship which ought, one would suppose, to characterize Christians of all denominations. It would seem, however, from the above and similar avowals, which I have occasionally seen, that I have labored under a mistake.

Now, how does it appear that the Protestant Episcopal Church is an "original Church of Christ?" I suppose the writer founds his opinion upon the assumption that that Church has derived its authority in an uninterrupted succession of episcopal ordination from

the days of the apostles. I will not now enter into this question. Allowing that, so far as the simple act of consecration is concerned, there has been no interruption in the episcopal office, and that the Church of England has received its authority in this respect through a direct line, I shall undertake to prove that it has departed, in some respects at least, from the *original* church of Christ, as formed by him and his apostles.

1. In the first place, the apostles and all the primitive evangelists and preachers were chosen by Jesus Christ himself, and approved by their brethren and the whole church. In this particular the *Church of England* has departed from apostolic usage; for the bishops of this church are appointed by a *layman*, the king,—and what is more astonishing still, this *layman* himself is by that very church constituted its HEAD! Now let the sticklers for this exclusive originality produce a single example, during the first four centuries, if they can, where a bishop was selected by a single *layman*, and appointed to his charge; and where a *layman* was declared the *head* of the Christian church.

2. Jesus Christ commissioned his apostles to "GO INTO ALL THE WORLD, and preach the gospel to every creature." But when the archbishop of Canterbury was authorized by the British parliament to consecrate the late Bishop White for the American episcopate, he was restricted in the exercise of his episcopal office, and even as a simple preacher of the gospel, to places not within the British dominions. Hence, an American bishop, going into the British dominions, is prohibited not only from exercising his office as a bishop, but even preaching; nor is a priest or deacon allowed to preach in any Episcopal church

but they are all recognized simply as *laymen*.* Is not this a departure from the *original* character of the Christian ministry? Were the apostles, and primitive evangelists, and preachers, thus restricted in their

* The following is the act of Parliament in reference to this subject:—

"*An act to empower the archbishop of Canterbury, or the archbishop of York, for the time being, to consecrate to the office of a bishop, persons being subjects or citizens of countries out of his majesty's dominions.*

"Whereas, by the laws of this realm no person can be consecrated to the office of a bishop without the king's license for his election to that office, and the royal mandate under the great seal for his confirmation and consecration: And, whereas every person who shall be consecrated to the said office, is required to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and also the oath of due obedience to the archbishop: And, whereas there are divers persons subjects or citizens of countries out of his majesty's dominions, inhabiting and residing within the said countries, who profess the public worship of Almighty God according to the principles of the Church of England, and who, in order to provide a regular succession of ministers for the service of their church, are desirous of having certain of the subjects or citizens of those countries consecrated bishops, according to the form of consecration in the Church of England: Be it enacted by the king's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that from and after the passing of this act, it shall and may be lawful to and for the archbishop of Canterbury, or the archbishop of York, for the time being, together with such other bishops as they shall call to their assistance, to consecrate persons being subjects or citizens of countries out of his majesty's dominions, bishops for the purposes aforesaid, without the king's license for their election, or the royal mandate under the great seal for their confirmation and consecration, and without requiring them to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and the oath of due obedience to the archbishop for the time being. Provided always, that no persons shall be consecrated bishops in the manner herein provided, until the archbishop of Canterbury, or the archbishop of York, for the time being, shall have

labors by law, or by any act of consecration? Let him prove it who can. And until *Pro Ecclesia* can do it, let him moderate his zeal a little in his arrogant claim for the originality of his church, based as it is, upon an assumption as destitute of foundation as is the authority from Scripture for putting a *layman* at the *head* of the church, or for narrowing down the original commission to preach the gospel to all the world, so as to limit it to the land of Judea.

3. I am happy to find, since this number was first published, my views upon this subject confirmed by

first applied for, and obtained his majesty's license, by warrant under his royal signet and sign manual, authorizing and empowering him to perform such consecration, and expressing the name or names of the persons so to be consecrated; nor until the said archbishop has been fully ascertained of their sufficiency in good learning, of the soundness of their faith, and of the purity of their manners. Provided also, and be it hereby declared, that no person or persons consecrated to the office of a bishop in the manner aforesaid, nor any person or persons deriving their consecration from or under any bishops so consecrated, nor any person or persons admitted to the order of deacon or priest by any bishop or bishops so consecrated, or by the successor or successors of any bishop or bishops so consecrated, shall be thereby enabled to exercise his or their respective office or offices within his majesty's dominions. Provided always, and be it further enacted, that a certificate of such consecration shall be given under the hand and seal of the archbishop who consecrates, containing the name of the person so consecrated, with the addition as well of the country whereof he is a subject or citizen, as of the church in which he is appointed bishop, and the further description of his not having taken the said oaths, being exempted from the obligation of so doing by virtue of this act."

It was this act of the British Parliament which removed the barrier out of the way of the English bishops, which had heretofore prevented them from consecrating an American episcopate, as they had frequently been requested to do.

a writer in the Churchman, of June 17, though on the main subject of his article, which is to show that the power of legislation in the church has been dele gated to the bishops as a divine right, I differ from him almost *toto cœlo*. While, however, he is endeavoring to maintain this indefensible position, without designing it—for he seems entirely unconscious of the point to which his argument carries him—he fully sustains the sentiment that the restrictions put upon the ordination of their bishops, priests, and deacons, is unscriptural, and therefore not in accordance with the original church of Christ. Hear him in the following strong language :—

"The church is not a confused multitude of independent societies. It is catholic, it is one. From this unity, which again I have no occasion to prove, it results that whatever relationship an individual holds to any part, he holds also to the catholic body. He that is baptized is not baptized into the membership of any particular church, but into that of the body of Christ, the church diffusive, the catholic church. What privileges a man enjoys in one part of the church, to the same is he entitled throughout the whole; so is it also with all the sacerdotal relationships. It is a point which I presume will not be denied by him who doth not deny the catholicity of the church, that the character imprinted by the imposition of hands—the sacerdotal power in all its grades—is unconfined. Deacon, priest, or bishop, the individual is ordained as such *for the whole*, and not for any portion of the church of Christ. If a common, it is an erroneous opinion, that a bishop when ordained is ordained for the diocese over which he is thereafter to exercise his jurisdiction. The ordinal of our own

is in accordance with the example of every true branch of the catholic church, from the earliest period to the present time. 'Receive,' it saith, 'the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God.' Is the church of God the particular church of which he is speedily to take charge? The church of God is the catholic church; and of this is he appointed a bishop. With this view of the subject agree the original commission and the divine command. In that commission, '*As my Father hath sent me, so send I you,*' and in that command, '*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,*' there is no location assigned the apostles and their successors for the exercise of their powers. That location was a subsequent ordinance of the church—was an ecclesiastical regulation, which convenience rendered necessary, which could not, as it did not, injuriously affect the power and prerogatives of the bishops attached to them as individuals, and accompanying them wherever they went, throughout the catholic world. The church was given by her divine Head to the apostles and their successors—may I be permitted so to speak—in a *coparcenary.* The episcopacy is a diffusive office, which lies in the whole college of bishops, according to the golden maxim of St. Cyprian, *Episcopatus unus est cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur.* There is but one bishopric in the church, and every bishop has an undivided portion of it."

These are unquestionably sound scriptural views. And little did the writer think, I apprehend, when he expressed them in this forcible language, that he was showing the defective character of the commission which Bishops White, Provost, and Madison received

from the archbishop of Canterbury, as well as of the commission which they give to those whom they ordain, by limiting them, one and all, in the exercise of their powers to those countries not under the jurisdiction of Great Britain. Truth will carry a man away from the landmarks of sectarianism, when a writer gives himself up to its influence, unfettered by the chains of human invention. Here, indeed, is a *human* regulation which, according to the doctrine of this writer, compels them to violate an *express command* of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, given, as they contend, to the apostles and their successors in office to the end of time, which, this writer avers, the bishops themselves have no right to disannul or lay aside—and yet these very pretended successors of the apostles did agree to contravene it at their ordination, and to fulfil which they are not allowed to commission those whom they consecrate to office, either as deacons, priests, or bishops!

After all this confession of their contravention of that very commission of which they predicate their authority to occupy the chair of succession, they have the unaccountable arrogance to set up an exclusive claim to be the true apostolic church! Let one of their ministers, though he be a "catholic bishop," a "bishop of the whole church," pass the lines into Canada, to the West Indies, to India, or to any part of the British dominions, and he is stripped of his priestly robes, robbed of his episcopal mitre, and is not allowed even to preach the gospel, unless he do it as a simple layman, or go into a dissenting meeting house! Should we any more hear of the apostolic character of this church, and that she *alone* possesses the true marks of "an original church of Christ," after

being thus stabbed to her vitals by one of her sons? Let the reader recollect that this "Churchman" is a strenuous advocate for high church principles, is published under the sanction and patronage of the bishop of New-York, and is a pleader for all the pretensions of those who condemn all orders and ordinances not administered by those who have received their commission in a direct line from the apostles: and the article is written, too, by a man who is advocating the doctrine that all the power in the church, even that of legislation, was committed by Jesus Christ to the twelve apostles, and through them to a third order in the church to the end of time: so entirely committed to them, that their calling their presbyters to deliberate with them in making canons is altogether an *act of grace.* He will, I trust, at least hereafter, allow that in the particular herein deprecated, they have departed from the *original church of Christ.*

These two things, therefore, the making the episcopacy to depend on the selection of a single *layman*, himself an assumed *head* of the church, thus secularizing the Christian ministry, and then restricting the labors of this ministry to a small portion of the globe—for in none of the dependencies of Great Britain, any more than in Great Britain herself, are the ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church allowed to officiate in the churches of the establishment—are sufficient of themselves to destroy this boasted claim to be the exclusive church of Jesus Christ.

Whether the Methodists ever separated from the Church of England or not, together with some other matters connected with this subject, and growing out of the above assertion, I shall reserve for another time. Sorry I am to be compelled, from the circumstances,

to speak or write on this subject. For the Protestant Episcopal Church, I have always felt something more than mere respect. But when I see such unfounded claims set up, and bandied about in the public prints, with such seeming contempt for those who presume to dissent from them, I cannot but feel it a duty to show their utter futility. Now that efforts are making to spread the gospel of our common salvation to the ends of the earth, by the united instrumentality of all denominations of evangelical Christians, why should the breach be widened between any of them, by the utterance of those things which tend naturally to alienate affection? Though we have no wish to contend with others on those debateable points about which the Protestant world have ever been less or more divided, yet we cannot consider it a duty to yield with silent obsequiousness to be thus "unchurched" by those who have no stronger reasons for an *originality* of church character. It is much more important, in my estimation, to exemplify the purity of true religion in our doctrine, spirit, and conduct, than it is to contend for mere forms and ceremonies. Those, however, who drive us to this last alternative, by such sweeping assertions as those at the head of this article, must bear the consequences resulting from the discussion.

NUMBER II.

Functions of ministers should be confined to no place—Secular headship of the church unscriptural—The Methodists did not separate from the Protestant Episcopal Church, nor from the Church of England—The Methodist Episcopal Church organized *before* the Protestant Episcopal Church—The Protestant Episcopalians separated, in fact, from the English Church—Methodists left to provide for themselves—Descended from regular presbyters—Assumptions of *Pro Ecclesia* unchurch all who dissent from him.

In my former communication on this subject, I produced two facts to show that the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church had both departed from apostolic and primitive usage; the former by investing a layman with the power of selecting and appointing bishops; and the latter in suffering itself to be restricted in the exercise of ministerial functions. Were those restrictions confined simply to the exercise of the episcopal functions, they might not be so objectionable: for there is no absolute call for the exercise of these, either for a valid ministry, or for preaching the gospel: but the objection lies with most oppressive weight against thus circumscribing the ministers of religion in preaching the gospel of our salvation: and therefore furnishes conclusive proof that so far this church has departed from the "original church of Christ:" it is *not* apostolical and primitive, in this particular, at least.

I might have brought another objection against the Church of England. This same church, after declaring one of the most profligate and tyrannical princes* that ever disgraced a throne the *head of the*

* I need hardly inform the reader that I allude to Henry VIII., whose libidinous desires so governed his decisions as to lead him alternately to murder and the most lascivious indulgence.

church! and making this secular headship hereditary, whether in male or female issue! constituted these bishops, thus made, a part of the national legislature, permanently and *ex officio* such! Will *Pro Ecclesia* bring a parallel to this in any age of the Christian church before Constantine usurped the powers of the church over the heads of his pliant and courteous bishops? When he has tried his skill upon this point, and presented us the parallel—such a one as will fully satisfy either himself or his bishop—I will present him with a few more contrasts between the Church of England and the "original church of Christ," for the trial of his patience and skill in searching into the ancient records of the church.

And as the American episcopate was received from the hands of these secularized bishops, so far as its validity is made to rest on the authority thus derived, it is doubted whether it, of itself, conveys any thing special to entitle it to an exclusive claim to a primitive character. It is hoped, however, that *Pro Ecclesia* will not have the imprudence and temerity to urge this point to make out the parallel between the primitive church and his own, lest he force it beyond what he might wish, so as to involve the question whether such a manifest departure from apostolic usage is at all conformable to the original church of Christ.

The next question to be examined is, whether the Methodists ever "separated from the Church of England." It is well known that the Wesleyan Methodists, in England, have never to this day formally separated from that church, but consider themselves among its members and stanch friends; so much so

that they have been invited, as I understand, to amalgamate their ministry with that of the church.

Well, have the Methodists in this country separated from the Protestant Episcopal Church? I answer, No—for they were never united with that church. So far from this, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, and their ministers consecrated *before* the Protestant Episcopal Church had an existence—at a time, I believe, when there was not a single bishop of that church in this country: for Dr. Coke arrived in New-York on the third of November 1784, *eleven* days before Bishop Seabury was consecrated to that office, by the nonjuring bishops of Scotland; and on the 25th of December following, the General Conference assembled in Baltimore, at which time the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. But even allowing that Bishop Seabury had arrived on the continent—which seems very improbable—the Protestant Episcopal Church was not organized until three years afterward. The first general convention, preparatory to a special and an independent organization, was held in the city of Philadelphia in 1785, and it was not before the year 1787 that the terms of agreement, or the constitutional compact of that church was ratified; nor was the church fully authorized to exercise the full powers of an independent body until 1790, when Bishop Madison, a clergyman of Virginia, was consecrated to the episcopal office by the archbishop of Canterbury. For though Bishops Provost and White had been consecrated in 1787, they were not allowed to consecrate others to the episcopal office until there were three regular bishops, constituted such by receiving their ordination from the hands of English bishops. Properly speak-

ing, therefore, the Protestant Episcopal Church was not fully organized, by the possession of entire episcopal powers, until *six* years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Hence we never separated from that church. And if priority of existence gives priority of right, we claim the birth-right, and may therefore demand somewhat of a filial relationship from the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Did we separate from the Church of England? So far as we were connected with it we did. This connection, however, in this country, was merely nominal. That church had, indeed, no existence here at this time. With the annihilation of the civil power of Great Britain in this country, fell all ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Many of the clergy, during the revolution, being tories, had fled to England, some had accepted of military offices, and others of them were fit for any thing beside the clerical office. There was, therefore, no English Church, claiming spiritual jurisdiction in the country. How could we separate from that which had no real existence! As we shall see hereafter, the Methodists were *left* to take care of themselves in the best way they could.

But even allowing that we did, in a formal manner, separate, what did we more than our younger sister? Did not they also form a separate organization, differing as much from the Church of England, as we do from them, if indeed not more? And if the mere act of separation has vitiated the church in one case, has it not also in the other?

But, perhaps, *Pro Ecclesia* will reply, that though they formed a separate organization, leaving out some articles of religion, abridging and altering others, and inserting new ones, as well as altering and abridging

some of the prayers, yet they have preserved the line of succession unbroken by receiving episcopal consecration from the English bishops. The full consideration of this objection, I must reserve for another article. I will therefore only observe here, that if any dependence is to be placed on this line of succession, we have it as well as they—with only this difference—*ours* descended to us from *presbyters* never secularized by having been incorporated with a co-ordinate branch of the civil legislature—*theirs* from *bishops* selected by a layman, and acting under a law which obliged them to disfranchise the very men they consecrated from both their episcopal and clerical office, whenever they came under the shadow of that church on which they are dependant for their official existence. Whether this circumstance conveys any superior official dignity on the men who were consecrated, I will leave to their deliberate judgment. For my own part, I should greatly prefer an authority received from such men as John Wesley, and those associated with him, under the circumstances in which it was conferred, than if I had received it from the hands of the archbishop of Canterbury, under the circumstances before detailed. As before said, however, this branch of the question deserves more consideration than I can devote to it in this communication. In the meantime, I must be permitted to ask *Pro Ecclesia* to prove the originality of his church, from a comparison of it with the primitive church, in some of its peculiar rites and ceremonies, as prescribed in its Canons and Book of Common Prayer. In doing this he must give us chapter and verse, either from the Holy Scriptures, or from the apostolic fathers of the first and second centuries, "without note or comment."

Let no one rashly conclude that these remarks are made in a captious spirit. I have no wish to offer any indignity to the Protestant Episcopal Church, which is estimable on more accounts than one. But when such high claims to official dignity and exclusive canonicalness are set up, and echoed from year to year with an assurance apparently indicative of a belief that they are incontrovertible, it is time that their fallacy was detected and exposed, not by mere assertion, but by an appeal to facts and arguments, derived from an unquestionable source. Is *Pro Ecclesia* aware that his assumptions exclude from the communion of the church the entire body of Protestants who hold to the validity of presbyterial ordination? That thereby all baptisms and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which are administered by ministers other than those who are episcopally ordained, in his sense of the word, are rendered null and void? And is he prepared for such a wide-sweeping denunciation as this? Does he persuade himself that this claim will be quietly yielded to him by all these denominations? Is he not, moreover, aware that the position he has taken will expose him to be driven back into the precincts of "mother church" before he can successfully resist the onsets of his adversaries? Leaving him to answer these questions in any way he may think reconcilable with truth and Christian charity, I close by a devout aspiration that He who is the proper Head of the church may so dispose the hearts of his servants as to induce them to contend more "earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," than for less substantial matters.

NUMBER III.

Wesley's motives vindicated—True reasons of his conduct in organizing the Methodist Episcopal Church—Objections obviated—True motive stated—Inconsistencies of his opponents—Disingenuous thrust of Junius—Wesley condemned unjustly—His opponents judged him by themselves—Proved from their own words.

In my last I endeavored to show that we never separated from the Protestant Episcopal Church, but that we had a prior existence. Those, however, who wish to impugn the motives of the excellent men who were instrumental in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have said that they were hurried into this transaction from a fear that it would not be accomplished before the return of Bishop Seabury, who had been in England for some time soliciting consecration from the English bishops, and who, being refused his application there, received it from the bishops of Scotland. All this, say the chroniclers of these transactions, must have been known to Mr. Wesley; and therefore he despatched Dr. Coke with haste that he might be beforehand with the Protestant Episcopalians. All this, as I shall, I think, be able to show, is mere suspicion, grounded upon no other evidence than what arises from suspecting others of being actuated by similar motives with ourselves.

But, that my readers may have a proper view of this subject, I must be permitted to quote a little from a late work published in this city, by an author from whom we were led to expect, if not brotherly kindness, at least an impartial regard to justice. Speaking of the organization of the Methodist Church, Dr. Hawks, in his History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, says:—

"If the object of Mr. Wesley was to secure to America the episcopate, the course pursued was rendered unnecessary, by existing circumstances. Dr. Seabury, of Connecticut, had been nearly two years in England soliciting episcopal consecration; and in consequence of difficulties, arising entirely from the English law, was on the point of going to Scotland to be consecrated there, at the very moment when Mr. Wesley laid hands on Dr. Coke: and it cannot be supposed that Mr. Wesley was ignorant of these facts, particularly as we find them to have been well known to his brother Charles."

By this, it is more than insinuated that the moving object of Mr. Wesley was to occupy the field of episcopal labor in America before it should be taken possession of by another, and thus the spirit of rivalry is introduced to account for the transactions of the Methodists. I have often wondered, when I have read strictures upon the conduct of Wesley, with what facility the writers bring in wrong motives, secular policy, and the spirit of unholy rivalship, to account for his conduct. Had such known the man of whom they wrote, and had they been capable of appreciating his motives by impartially weighing and estimating his character, they never could have attributed either a base or an improper motive to any part of his conduct. For my part, I believe he was incapable of being actuated by any unhallowed motive whatever. He set out with the purely simple desire of doing good in the name of the Lord, and from this desire I cannot believe he ever swerved for any one moment of his after life; and hence, whatever means he was convinced would be promotive of this simple object, he adopted without hesitation, provided they were such

as were sanctioned by the precepts of Christianity. The whole machinery of Methodism, as such, both in Europe and America, was only incidental to his main plan of doing good to the souls and bodies of men; for it no more entered into his original design to establish an independent community, when he commenced his ministerial career, than it did to proclaim the independence of America; for he was equally opposed to both, until the development of events constrained him to acknowledge the hand of God in their establishment.

The fact is, and Dr. Hawks ought to have known it before he undertook to account for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that Mr. Wesley had long been urged, with the greatest earnestness, by his friends in America, to provide them with a regular ministry, that they might no longer be destitute of the ordinances. So urgent had been many of the preachers and people on this subject, that some few of the preachers in Virginia had actually ordained one another, saying, during the war of the revolution, "As for this Wesley, we know not what has become of him;" and it was with the utmost difficulty that Mr. Asbury, and other influential preachers, who were opposed to these irregular proceedings, could restrain them, and finally succeed in bringing them back to reason and Scripture; and they at length succeeded, by holding out the just expectation that help would be afforded them in due time by Mr. Wesley, provided they waited patiently; for none of them, who understood the subject, doubted his authority to furnish them with the relief they needed.

Well; at length the war ended. The political power of Great Britain in this country was annihi-

lated—with that ceased all ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Most of the clergy of the English Church had left their flocks, some for one reason, and some for another. The independence of the United States had been acknowledged—the Methodist societies, which had greatly increased, even during the sanguinary conflict, were without the ordinances, and left to shift for themselves, in the midst of obloquy and reproach. In these circumstances Mr. Wesley was applied to for advice—and having calmly considered the matter, in the fear of God, long since convinced that bishops and presbyters, as to *order*, were the same in power, he laid aside those scruples which had arisen merely from prudential considerations—and having taken his decision, acted promptly, because he knew that the salvation of souls was at stake. To save these was his *only* object—and the event has fully justified his proceedings, and verified the predictions of his own mind, that in doing as he did in the premises, he was furnishing the poor sheep in this wilderness with pasture suited to their condition. This explains the whole. This was his single, his *only* object, and not to set up a rival episcopacy.

But let us examine some other sayings of Dr. Hawks in reference to this transaction. In the first place, he says, speaking of the consecration of Dr. Coke:—

"It was therefore the act of Mr. Wesley alone. It was an act, upon the propriety of which he took no counsel with his most intimate friends."

This appears to be asserted with a view to fix the responsibility of this act entirely upon Mr. Wesley, and in opposition to what he apprehended to be the wishes of his friends. Hereby his friends are

exonerated, and the blame attaches exclusively to Mr. Wesley himself. He is the alone criminal; yet in the very next page but one, this same writer, as if it were not enough to make Mr. Wesley act contradictory to himself, also contradicts his own most solemn asseveration, in the following language :—

"With an intellect enfeebled by the weight of fourscore and two years, he was seduced, by those who would use his vast influence for purposes of their own, into the adoption of a plan which the better judgment of his more vigorous understanding had more than once rejected. It is believed to have been the contrivance of a few individuals, who took the advantage of the infirmities of age, to procure from the dying ruler a decree which should transmit the sceptre to themselves."

In the first paragraph, Wesley is censured for *not* consulting with his friends—for acting on his *own* judgment exclusively. In the second, which relates to the same transaction, his once "vigorous understanding" is prostrate, and he plays into the hands of some ambitious favorites, who took the advantage of an *infirm old man*, that they might hereafter have the honor of wielding the sceptre of a Methodist bishop! Surely the charity of Dr. Hawks, in this instance, got the better of *his* understanding, or he would not have allowed his apology so flatly to contradict his censure. Before this discussion closes, I hope to be able to convince the worthy rector of St. Thomas, that Wesley evinced, in the transactions now under consideration, a maturity of judgment and a purity of intention which should commend him to the favorable regards of such enlightened minds and fervent spirits as adorn and actuate such men as Dr. Hawks. For

sure I am, that nothing short of inattention to the character and conduct of Wesley, would allow a man who manifests the zeal in the cause of Christ which distinguishes the writer who has drawn forth these animadversions, to utter any thing disrespectful to his character, and more especially such a severe and satirical inuendo as that which dropped from the pen of Junius. Under this conviction, I cannot but believe that the day is not distant when John Wesley will be revered as profoundly by the evangelical clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as he has been hated and persecuted by the lukewarm and profane, whether within or without the pale of the church.

In the meantime, there is another most disingenuous thrust at the character of John Wesley in the book before me. In the course of the revolutionary contest, Mr. Wesley, whose loyalty to his king and country was proverbial, thinking the Americans were wrong in taking up arms against their sovereign, wrote a "Calm Address" to them, in which he severely censures the Americans, and attempts to justify the mother country. This attracted the gaze of the celebrated Junius, than whom England never saw a writer at once uniting in himself more keenness of satire, acuteness of argument, and malevolence of feeling. It is well known to those who have read his letters, that, for personal invective, for ridiculous caricature, and for the manifestation of individual hatred, he is not surpassed in the annals of English literature. Mr. Wesley had wounded him. His radical blood was disturbed—and, turning upon his clerical antagonist with all his accustomed malevolence, shielded as he was by the concealment of his name, he hurled at Wesley the following unmerited rebuke:—

"You have forgotten the precepts of your Master, that God and mammon cannot be served together. You have one eye upon a pension, and the other upon heaven; one hand stretched out to the king, the other raised up to God. I pray that the first may reward, and the last forgive you."

This passage is quoted by Dr. Hawks with apparent approbation. It is another evidence that neither he nor his author understood Mr. Wesley; for a more manifest libel upon that holy man's character could not well be uttered than this of Junius. Mr. John Wesley seeking for a pension! The slander is too gross to need refutation. He striving to serve God and mammon! His whole life contradicts the base imputation. Why then should an author, who, if I am rightly informed, professes much love and friendship for the Methodists—and, indeed, in this very book, says, that "It is, at least, pleasant to indulge the hope that the day may yet come, when they" (the Protestant and Methodist Episcopal Churches) "shall again be one," —I say, why should *he* lend the influence of his good name to perpetuate such a vile imputation upon the character of one of the most holy, wise, conscientious, and diligent—and may I not add, *evangelical* men, the Church of England ever saw! Can he persuade himself that we are so ignorant of the character of Wesley, and of the arguments by which his conduct in this affair is to be justified, that he can make us sick of the one by such slander, and forsake the other from a hopelessness of an honorable defence! Will he attempt to force us into a confession of our weakness, and to make us ashamed of the founder of our church by loading his character with reproach?

But I return to the idea with which this commenced;

namely, that Mr. Wesley was induced to hasten the consummation of his plan for the American Methodists for fear that others would occupy the field before him. I have already suggested that this imputation could have no other foundation than a suspicion engendered in the breasts of those who feel the power of such motives themselves. I have not said this unadvisedly.

In looking over the late Bishop White's Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church, I find a detailed account of the difficulties and delays which arose in the way of the English prelates, in granting the American episcopate, by the consecration of the Rev. Messrs. Provost and White. While this business was pending, the good offices of men of distinction were used to further the desired object. Among others was that of Granville Sharpe, Esq., who in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, holds the following language :—

"An immediate interference is become the more necessary, not only on account of the pretensions of Dr. Seabury, and the *nonjuring bishops of Scotland*, (to which, however, I hope my letters will have given a timely check,) but also to guard against the presumption of Mr. Wesley and other Methodists; who, it seems, have sent over some persons under the name of superintendents, with an assumed authority to ordain priests, as if they were really invested with episcopal authority."

Here the archbishop is urged to expedite the business of conferring the episcopate upon the American applicants to countervail the influence of Mr. Wesley and the Methodists, whose labors had been so abundantly blessed on this continent. Now could those who impute such exceptionable motives

to Mr. Wesley, in the affair of ordaining Dr. Coke, bring as tangible proof as the above in support of their assertions, they would have some ground for them. "An immediate interference" is solicited from the archbishop, not because souls are perishing "for lack of knowledge," but because Mr. Wesley and the Methodists had already organized a church in this country, and their "assumed authority" must be put down.

Providence permitting, I shall in my next examine the question, whether Mr. Wesley was justified, from Scripture precedent, and from the practice of the primitive fathers, in adopting measures for the organization of the Methodist societies in this country into an independent church.

NUMBER IV.

Terms bishop and presbyter signify the same order—This compatible with distinction of office—This view supported, 1. From Scripture; 2. From the fathers: Clemens Romanus, Polycarp, Irenaus, Cyprian, Jerome—Stillingfleet—Explanation of the words *bishop* and *presbyter*—Distinction between *order* and *office* illustrated—Foundation of episcopal assumptions—These should be guarded against.

In my last I promised to examine the question, whether Mr. Wesley acted in accordance with apostolic and primitive practice in the measures he adopted to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church. In order to settle this question, we must appeal to the Scriptures and the usage of the primitive church. From these authorities we think we are justified in laying down these propositions:—

1. That the terms bishop and presbyter, or elder

signified in the primitive church, the same *order of ministers*.

2. That to them was committed, under the superintendence of the apostles and evangelists, the government of the church, the ordaining of ministers, and the administration of the ordinances.

3. That Mr. Wesley being a presbyter, had a right, in conjunction with other presbyters who were associated with him in the act of consecration, to set apart others to the same office, and even, if he saw fit, to create a superior minister.

For the support of the first proposition, our appeal is first to the Scriptures, and secondly to the primitive fathers. It is stated in the proposition that the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* signify the same person or *order*. There was, however, as it appears, this difference—the term *bishop* was a title of *office* signifying *overseer*, and the word *presbyter* referred to the *order*, including all who were exalted to the order of *elders* or *presbyters* in the church; and hence, though an *elder* or *presbyter* might not be a *bishop* or *overseer*, an *overseer* must be a *presbyter*, for none but *presbyters* were admitted to the office of *overseer*. This may account for these persons being indifferently called *elders*, *presbyters*, and *bishops*, or *overseers*; they were called *elders* or *presbyters* because none were generally consecrated to that order but those who had acquired wisdom by a long experience in the things of God: they were called *bishops* or *overseers* when appointed to some special oversight in the church, with somewhat of an extended jurisdiction.

In support of this view of the subject, we refer the reader to Acts xx, 17, 28, where St. Paul addresses himself to the επισκοποι, which are called in our trans-

lation *elders* in verse 17, and *overseers* in verse 20, a proof this that these men had the oversight of the church at that time, and that there were a plurality of them in the city of Ephesus. They could not, therefore, have been diocesan bishops, unless we absurdly suppose that there were several dioceses in one city. Hence it follows most conclusively that those denominated *elders* or *presbyters* were the same as those denominated *bishops*.

Here I cannot but notice an important concession of Dr. *Chapman*, in his sixth sermon on the "Ministry, Worship, and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church,"—some of whose positions I shall more particularly canvass hereafter—in which he attempts to prove that bishops were an order superior to presbyters. His words are:—

"Many bishops in a single place at the same moment, would have given no slight color to the idea of their being of the like order with presbyters." And does he doubt whether there were "many bishops in a single place at the same moment?" He certainly does, for he adds, "the undeviating evidence of there being rightfully only one, establishes the permanency of the apostolic office in that one beyond all reasonable contradiction."

This is a most astounding declaration for a man who makes such large pretensions to a knowledge of the early history of the church. "The undeviating evidence of there being rightfully but one!" How could he say so in the face of this text in the Acts of the Apostles? "*Rightfully* but one!" Were these men usurpers or "schismatics," who came at the bidding of the apostle? Why did he not then rebuke or depose them? So far from this, he tells them that the

Holy Ghost had made them επισκοποι, *overseers* or *bishops;* and there were "many" of them in that "single place at the same moment." If, therefore, Dr. Chapman take not back his concession, his entire argument is overthrown: for his appeal to writers of the *third* century can never invalidate this testimony of sacred Scripture recorded about the middle of the first century. Here, at Ephesus, in the apostolic days, in the very presence of one of the greatest of the apostles, were a *plurality* of *bishops* approved of by him, and declared to have been constituted such by the "Holy Ghost." Then must Dr. Chapman, on his own admission, allow that presbyters were of a "like order with bishops," and hence surrender that branch of his argument into the hands of his antagonists.*

* By a writer in the "Churchman," who tells his readers that he is a *Methodist preacher*, and whose dull, prosing pieces, made up as they principally are from scraps gathered from the incoherent Essays of Dr. Cook, another apostate from Methodism, are undeserving of any serious refutation, I have been accused of misrepresenting Dr. Chapman in the above quotation, because he does allow that the words *bishop* and *elder* were used interchangeably in the apostolic writings. I was aware that Dr. Chapman allowed this. But it by no means alters the force of his concession. He says, the *undeviating* evidence of there being rightfully only one "in a single place at the same moment." Now, what does he mean by this *undeviating evidence?* Whence does he antedate? Does he, or does he not, go back to the age of the apostles? If he does, and places *them* in the episcopal chair, then his assertion is unsupported by the facts in the case, for there were no less than *twelve* of them, at first acting *conjointly*, and not in *separate* dioceses. And so far were they from taking each one his diocese, that Paul and Barnabas, the latter of whom Dr. Chapman claims as an apostle, generally travelled and acted together. And who has not read the rebuke which St. Paul gave to St. Peter for his dissimulation? To which did the diocese of Antioch

Whether, in after times, when the pride of episcopal dominion had supplanted that primitive simplicity which characterized the early officers of the church, a single bishop only was found "in the same place at the same moment," is another question; and although it should be settled in the affirmative, it will make nothing in favor of the pretensions of modern diocesan episcopacy to apostolic usage and authority, while they derive their arguments from the *early* distinction between bishops and presbyters. But see the quotations which follow.

Look we now at St. Paul's epistle to Titus, i, 5, 7, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain ELDERS in every city as I had appointed thee."—"For a BISHOP must be blameless as the steward of God." Here it is manifest that the same persons are called indifferently *elder* and *bishop*, evincing that, as to *order*, there is no difference.

belong at this time, to Paul or Peter? Or was it common ground where either had a right, one as much as another, to exercise his episcopal functions?

But if Dr. Chapman does *not* go back to the age of the apostles for the commencement of his "*undeviating evidence*," then his assertion is equally erroneous, if he mean to say that there was rightfully but one in the bounds of what he calls a diocese; for within such bounds there were, even to the *third*, and in some places to the *fourth* century, *many bishops*, each one having the charge of a single congregation. This *undeviating* evidence, therefore, turns out to be no evidence at all, but is contradicted by the concurrent testimony of sacred Scripture, and the primitive fathers, all of whom declare that diocesan episcopacy, which recognizes the authority of only one bishop over a number of congregations, was unknown to the primitive church. Hence, as the premiss of Dr. Chapman is without foundation, his argument built upon it is utterly overthrown, and the Methodist preacher falls beneath it.

And that this is the true interpretation of the apostle's language is manifest from numerous quotations from the apostolic fathers. The quotations which I shall produce are taken chiefly from *Lord King's* Account of the *Constitution, Discipline,* and *Worship* of the Primitive Church. And that the reader may rely upon these as correct, I will remark, that the author has fully verified all his quotations by inserting the originals themselves in the margin of his book, which any reader of it may consult for himself.*

Clemens Romanus sometimes mentions many *bishops* in the church of Corinth, whom he also calls in other parts of his epistle *presbyters.* Thus he commands the Corinthians to be subject to their *presbyters,* calling them in one line επισκοποι, *bishops* or *overseers,* and in the second line after, πρεσβυτεροι, *presbyters.* So *Polycarp* exhorts the Philippians to be subject to their *presbyters* and *deacons,* by which he unquestionably meant the *bishops,* for they were

* I am aware that *Slater* has attempted a refutation of Lord Chancellor King's Account of the Primitive Church, and in a few particulars he may have succeeded; nor am I pledged for all the conclusions which his lordship draws from the data which he adduces from the early writers of the church. The quotations speak for themselves, and every one is at liberty to make his own inferences. It appears evident, however, as I think I shall be able abundantly to show in the course of this discussion, that bishops and presbyters belonged to the same order of ministers, and that they possessed the original right of ordination, and of modelling the church according to the circumstances of time and place, so long as they did not transcend a known precept of Jesus Christ. The clamor which has been made about the absurdity of a body of ministers, or any other body, collectively, constituting an officer superior to themselves, is wholly without foundation, as it is a matter of every day's occurrence both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. But this topic will be more fully noticed in another place.

the governors of the church. *Ireneus*, in his synodical epistle, twice calls *Anicetus*, *Pius*, *Higynas*, *Telesphorus*, and *Xistus*, *bishops* of Rome, πρεσβυτεροι, *presbyters*. And those *bishops* who derived their succession from the apostles, he calls the *presbyters* of the church; and whom *Clemens Alexandrinus* in one line calls the *bishop* of a certain city, a few lines after he calls the *presbyter*.

The same titles are also given to them both. One of the descriptive appellations of a *bishop* is *pastor*, and *Cyprian* calls his presbyters *pastors of the flock*. Another was that of *president*, or one set over the people; and this same father calls the presbyters *presidents*, as those who were set over the people. The bishops were also called *rectors* or *rulers*: and *Origen* calls the presbyters the *governors of the people*.

But *Clemens Romanus*, in his Ancient Remains, is still more express upon this subject, in the following words:—"In the country and cities where the apostles preached, they *ordained* their first converts for *bishops* and *deacons* over those who should believe—and after referring to Isa. lx, 17, in support of his doctrine, he adds these remarkable words:—"The apostles foreknew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that contention would arise about the name *episcopacy*, and therefore, being endued with a perfect foreknowledge, appointed the aforesaid officers, (viz.) *bishops* and *deacons*, and left the manner of their succession described, that so when they died, other approved men might succeed them and perform their office."

The following passage is from *Ireneus*, where he exhorts the people "to withdraw from those *presbyters* who serve their lusts, and having not the fear of God

in their hearts, contemn others, and are lifted up with the dignity of their first session; but to adhere to those who keep the doctrine of the apostles, and, with their *presbyterial order*, are inoffensive, and exemplary in sound doctrine, and a holy conversation, to the information and correction of others; for such *presbyters* the church educates, and of whom the prophet saith, I will give thee princes in peace, and *bishops* in righteousness."

These quotations from the Scriptures and from the primitive fathers, are quite sufficient for our purpose, as they make it most evident that those called *bishops* and *presbyters* were the same *order* of ministers. For the purpose, however, of removing all room for doubt upon this subject, I will present some quotations from *Stillingfleet* in reference to this point. After producing a passage from *Jerome* upon this subject, which, from its not being accurately understood by some of his commentators, had been quoted by those who contend for the divine right of bishops over and above presbyters, Stillingfleet remarks, "Is it imaginable that a man who had been proving all along the superiority of a *presbyter* above a *deacon*, because of his *identity with a bishop in the apostles' times*, should at the same time say that a bishop was above a presbyter by the apostles' institution, and so directly overthrow all he had been saying before?"—"such an inconsistency is scarce incident to a man of very ordinary esteem for intellectuals, much less such a one as *Jerome* is reputed to be. The plain meaning then of Jerome is no more but this: that as *Aaron and his sons in the order of priesthood were above the Levites under the law, so the bishops and presbyters in the order of the evangelical priesthood are above the*

deacons under the gospel. For the comparison runs not between Aaron and his sons under the law, and bishops and presbyters under the gospel; but between Aaron and his sons, as one part of the comparison under the law, and the Levites under them as the other, so under the gospel, bishops and presbyters make one part of the comparison, answering to Aaron and his sons in that wherein they all agree, (viz.) *the order of priesthood*, and the other part under the gospel is that of deacons, answering to the Levites under the law. The opposition then is not in the power of jurisdiction between bishops and priests, but between the same power of order, which is alike both in bishops and presbyters, *according to the acknowledgment of all*, to the office of deacons which stood in competition with them."

Now I think the point is sufficiently established, that both the apostles themselves and the primitive fathers, did use the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* as convertible terms—that they were expressive of the same order of ministers in the church—and that, therefore, the term *bishop* is not descriptive of an order superior to that of *presbyter*.

But if this be so, it may be asked why these different appellations were used to designate the same order of ministers? The answer is very plain: *Presbyter* comes from πρεσβυς, which signifies a man somewhat advanced in life, and hence the *Jewish Sanhedrin* were styled πρεσβυτερον, *presbytery*, because it was composed chiefly of elderly men; and for the same reason those ministers in the Christian church who were admitted to the responsible office of *elders*, were called πρεσβυτεροι, *presbyters*, because they were generally selected from among those *deacons* who,

from their laborious services in the church, and long experience in divine things, had acquired a wisdom and an influence to qualify them for a prudent government of the church.

The word επισκοπος, signifies simply an *overseer*, and is applied to any person to whom the *oversight* of any particular work was given, whether of a military, civil, or ecclesiastical character. Whenever any of these elders were appointed to a charge over the flock of Christ, they were termed *overseers*, simply to designate their official and responsible relation to the church. And as it frequently happened that there were a number of *presbyters* in the same city, as at Ephesus, whenever these were assembled together for counsel, it became necessary that some one of them should act as *president* or *moderator* for the time being; and from his holding this office, he was by way of distinction denominated the *overseer* or *bishop*, because he exercised a sort of an oversight of the whole church in that particular place. It might frequently happen, also, that there were some of those presbyters not yet appointed to a particular charge in any department of the church, but acted as assistants to others; and then those under whom they officiated, were their *overseers* or *bishops*, while those assistants themselves were distinguished simply as *presbyters*.

We may see the same thing exemplified in our own and other churches in this day. On a district there are a number of presbyters or elders under the *oversight* of another elder of the same order precisely, but who, for the time being, has an *official* superiority over those under his charge. The same may be said of a circuit, on which two elders or more are stationed, to one of whom is given the *oversight* of all the rest,

ministers and people, although as to *order*, they are all the same; and yet as to *office*, for the time being, the *ruling* elder holds the relation of an *overseer* or *bishop*, to his colleagues in the work. So a *rector* in the Protestant Episcopal Church may have one assistant or more, called in England *curates*, of the same *order* with himself, and yet he exercises such an oversight over them, that he may be very fitly denominated their *overseer* or *bishop*.

But this is more especially illustrated in our church by the travelling and local ministry. Here is a large number of local preachers, elders and deacons, having no special oversight, who are nevertheless, many of them at least, presbyters in the church; and yet, in consequence of their not having any particular charge, cannot with propriety be denominated *overseers* or bishops—while the travelling elders, to whom the oversight of the circuits is given, are the proper *overseers* of the flock of Christ. But will any man in his senses say, that because these local presbyters have no special oversight in the church, they are of an inferior *order?* or that because a man is a travelling presbyter, he is of an order superior to a presbyter? He is superior in *office*, but not in *order*. This is a distinction necessary to be observed in order to understand the primitive organization of the Christian church.

It is preposterous to infer that because a minister in the church is distinguished by different appellations, he is therefore of another *order*. Here is an elder or presbyter who has colleagued with him several other presbyters, and who, for the sake of convenience and an orderly conducting of business, has an oversight of them, and is thence designated as their *overseer*. At another time a society is called to transact some busi-

ness peculiar to its organization, and he is called to preside, and is on that account called their *chairman* or *president.* Up springs a novice, and stretches his throat, and cries out, "You have created another *order of ministers!*" Does he need any arguments to refute him?

So in the primitive church, from the circumstances in which they were placed, it frequently became necessary, that they might conduct all things "decently and in order," to select one from among the presbyters to preside in their councils, to give a direction to their proceedings, and, as *Mosheim* says, "to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks,"—and hence he was called their *overseer*—and hence also some have rashly concluded that these presbyters, so denominated, were a superior order of ministers.

That this primitive practice laid the foundation for high episcopal pretensions, and ultimately led, by a very natural *abuse* of their authority, to the distinctions now so much insisted upon, I am willing to admit, and hence the necessity of guarding against the encroachments of these high episcopal prerogatives, which had no place in the primitive church, among those who were equal in official dignity. That the *apostles* exercised a spiritual jurisdiction over the whole church, presbyters, deacons, and people, we grant, but that any lordly superiority was claimed by those denominated *bishops*, any farther than we have explained, is denied, on the authority I have already adduced.

Perhaps it may be satisfactory to the reader to see in what sense this word is used in the Sacred Scriptures. The Greek word επισκοπος, comes from επι, *upon* or *over*, and σκοπα, perfect middle voice, and this from the passive form of the verb σκεπομαι, which

signifies to *look at* or *inspect*, and hence the verb επισκοπεω, the radical meaning of which is to *oversee*, to *look diligently*, or to *superintend*. The Hebrew verb פקד (pequod) the verbal signification of which is, to *visit*, to *take cognizance of*, to *take view of*, to *review*, or to *muster*, is generally translated in the *Septuagint* by the above word, επισκοπεω, which means about the same thing. Our word *bishop* is of Saxon origin, *bischop*, and is supposed by the lexicographers to be a corruption of the Latin *episcopus*, as the latter is most manifestly the Greek word Latinized. Its ambiguous import to the mere English reader is manifest to every thinking mind.

Let us refer to a few passages of Sacred Scripture where this word occurs, and endeavor to ascertain the sense in which it is used, comparing, in the meantime, the original with some of the most common versions. In Gen. xxi, 1, we read ויהוה פקד את שרה, "And the Lord visited Sarah." *Septuagint*, και κυριος επεσκεψατο. *Vulgate*, Visitavit autem Dominus Saram. *French*, Et L'Eternal visita Sara. *Italian*, E'l signora visito Sara. *Spanish*, Y visito el senor a Sara. In all these versions it will be perceived that the original, or verbal signification of the Hebrew root פקד, is preserved in the word *visited;* the plain meaning of which is, the Lord *visited* or *looked after* Sarah, in order that his promise to her should have its fulfilment in due time.

In Numbers xxxi, 14, פקודי is rendered in our translation, *officers*—"And Moses was wroth with the *officers* of the host." In the *Septuagint* they are called επισκοποις (*visiters* or *overseers.*) *Vulgate*, tribunis, (*tribunes* or *keepers* of the people's liberties.) *French*, captaines de l'armee (*captains of the armies.*)

The Italian and Spanish about the same. These were *military officers* whom Moses had appointed over the several tribes of Israel, who were sent to war against the Midianites; and yet they are called in the Greek translation by the same name by which the ministers of Christ's flock are designated; manifestly because they were appointed to *oversee* or to *superintend* the people committed to their charge.

In 1 Sam. xv, 2, פקדתי is rendered in the *English* version, *remember*, and in the *Septuagint* εκδικησω, which signifies, *I will punish.* The *Vulgate* has it *recensui*, (I will *muster*, *review*, or *rehearse.*) The French says, Ainsi a dit l'Eternal des armees; J' ai rappale en ma memoire—(*Thus saith the God of hosts, I have called to my memory.*) The plain meaning of the passage is, I will *visit* upon *Amalek* the punishment which is due to him for his atrocities towards my people Israel—I will not *forget* him—implying a jealous *superintendence* over the interests of his people.

In Nehemiah xi, 9, the same word is used to denote both a civil and religious officer.—"And Joel, the son of Zichri was their פקיד, (*overseer.*) *Septuagint*, επισκοπος επ' αυτας, (*bishop* or *overseer* over them.) The Vulgate has given the word an easy translation; *præpositus eorum*, (*was put over them.*) The French has also a similar rendering—*commis sur eux*, (*put over them.*) The Italian and Spanish the same. This Joel was an officer having both a civil and religious jurisdiction over those intrusted to his care, whose conduct he was to *inspect*, and to whose safe keeping they were committed. He was therefore held responsible for their conduct.

In Isaiah lx, 17, where the prophet is predicting

the future accession of the Gentiles to the church under the gospel dipensation, it is said, "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness." Here the LXX. have rendered the words *officers* and *exactors*, by επισκοπους (*bishops* or *overseers*) and αρχοντας, (*chiefs* or *princes.*) The *Vulgate*, *visitationem*, (*visiters,*) and *præpositos*, (*overseers.*) The French version has the most free translation of either—Et je ferai que la paix regnera sur toi, a la justice te gouvernera—*And I will cause peace to reign over thee, and justice to govern thee.* "Clement, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, commenting upon this text, says that it is a prediction respecting the government of the church under the gospel by the two offices of *bishops* and *deacons*, and gives it this rendering in Greek:—Καταςησω τους επισκοπους αυτων εν δικαιοσυνη, και τους διακονους αυτων εν πιςει. *I will appoint their overseers in righteousness* and *their deacons in faith.*" See Park. Gr. and Eng. Lexicon.

It is most manifest that in all the above places the word is used to designate a person who had been appointed to take the *oversight* of any particular concern, whether military, civil, or ecclesiastical; and it is so far from distinguishing a superior officer in either of these departments, that in most of the places cited it denotes a subordinate; as in the case of those ap pointed by Moses, Num. xxxi, 14, and by Nehemiah, Neh. xi, 9, who were subject to the authority and under the control of those supreme magistrates.

In the numerous places where this word occurs in the Old Testament, whether as a *verb* or a *noun*, this radical signification is kept up, and implies uniformly a *visiting* or a *visiter*, either in *kindness*, with a view to *take care* of, to *provide for*, to *superintend*, to *in-*

spect, with an intent to regulate every thing amiss, or to reward for diligence; or in *vengeance*, with a view to *punish* for any delinquency, after a proper *inspection* of the conduct; or yet more generally to take a *special oversight* of any particular *concern*, *person* or *persons*, *business* or *thing*. Let the reader who wishes to be more thoroughly convinced of this, consult the following passages, comparing the Hebrew (of those in the Old Testament,) with the Greek of the Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, and English translations:—1 Kings xx, 15; Ezek. xxx, 14; 1 Sam. xx, 6; xxv, 15; Isa. xxxiv, 15; Jer. li, 27; Job xxxvi, 23; xxxi, 14; Isa. xxxviii, 10; Psa. xxxi, 6; Gen. xxxix, 5; xli, 34; Jer. i, 10; xv, 3; Lev. xxvi, 16; 1 Pet. ii, 25; Acts xx, 28; 1 Pet. v, 2; Phil. i, 1; 1 Tim. iii, 2; Tit. i, 7; Heb. xii, 15.

By an examination of these texts it will appear most evident that we can derive no argument from the *name* simply of these officers, respecting the *powers* with which they were invested. Let them then be called *overseers*, *superintendents*, or *bishops*—though this latter is to us of all others the most inappropriate—or *inspectors*, but let us not attribute powers to those mentioned in the New Testament, to which they were strangers in the apostolic days, nor attach such an importance to their office as to make them, *jure divino*, a *third order* in the church so essential that there can be no valid ordinances nor orders without them.

From the above examples it will appear evident that this word was not at first used in a technical sense to designate an ecclesiastical officer at all; but from its use and application in the Old Testament, the New Testament writers borrowed and applied it to desig nate those officers in the church who were appointed

to take the *oversight* of its spiritual concerns; and hence time and use have given sanction to the exclusive appropriation of the term to ministers of the gospel: while our opponents use it to represent one particular grade of ministers, created such by a *third* consecration, and as expressive of an order *essential* to the very existence of a gospel church. It is in this latter sense chiefly that we object to its use and application, and not as expressing a superior officer for the sake of distinction merely in writing or conversation.

The reason why this word *bishop* was retained in our version of the Bible, instead of the more simple and expressive term *overseer* or *superintendent*, will appear manifest from a little attention to the history of this translation. The bishops of the English church who revised Cranmer's Bible, retained this exotic word, no doubt, with a view to please their female sovereign, Queen Elizabeth, who succeeded to the headship of the church, and who thought her throne would be the more secure if supported by a church hierarchy, which should nearest resemble, in its institution and external order and ceremonies, the civil establishment. As this revision was carried on under the control of the high court of commissioners established by that despotic princess, with Archbishop Parker, whose persecutions of the Puritans are of such notoriety as not to need a rehearsal here, at its head; and as the queen and her council displayed a partiality for the utmost pomp and splendor in the clergy and the ceremonies of religion; they doubtless made their version of the Bible, in all those places which speak of the ministers of religion, favor their high church notions as far as they could with any show of consistency. And as the controversy between the court party and the Pu-

ritans, the latter being by far the most weighty in respect to talent and piety, turned chiefly on the powers of the Christian ministry, clerical robes, and the pompous ceremonies which were considered the relics of popery, the former were induced to make the Bible speak, in reference to these subjects, as much in their favor as possible.

Afterward, when King James ordered a new translation of the Bible, he instructed the translators to deviate as little as possible from the "Bishops' Bible," assigning as a reason, at the Hampton Court conference, for the retention of such words as *bishop* instead of *elder*, and *church* instead of *congregation*, "No bishop no king." But it is doubted whether the king himself, or any of his advisers, thought at that time that this word designated an officer in the church made so by a *triple* consecration, in such a sense that there could be no true church nor valid administrations without him. This doctrine sprung up by degrees afterward, and was advocated with a view to oppose the pretensions of the Puritans, and to check the progress of those principles of ministerial parity, and congregational equality, which, in the opinion of high-toned churchmen, threatened to undermine the throne and to shake the stability of the hierarchy. And thus to avoid the extreme of congregational equality on the one hand, they ran into the extreme of ecclesiastical despotism on the other. If we can find the happy medium of a scriptural government and rational liberty, which lies at an equal distance from the two extremes, we shall not despair of rendering some good service to the cause of truth and righteousness.

Notwithstanding, therefore, this abuse of the word *bishop*, and the pernicious influence it has exerted on

the condition of the church and the world, we need not dispute but that the apostles left successors in the church, so far as its government is concerned, to whom a special *oversight* was given for particular purposes; but I contend, at the same time, that whatever authority they possessed, by virtue of consecration by the hands of man, they derived it from the body of presbyters or bishops, to whom the right of ordination originally belonged, and from whom, under the higher sanction of Jesus Christ, the proper head of the church, even the Apostle Paul was indebted for his official standing. I merely mention this here to apprize my readers of the course intended to be pursued in conducting the present discussion. The whole proceeds upon this principle,—That while some things are prescribed by Jesus Christ and his apostles as *essential* to the purity and integrity of the church, others are left to be regulated as the exigencies of time, place, and circumstances shall dictate to be expedient and suitable.

NUMBER V.

Powers of the ministry—Presbyters possessed the powers of ordination—First commission of the apostles—Consecration of St. Paul—This was a formal induction into the order of the ministry—A dilemma for those who deny this—The doctrine proved from 1 Tim. iv, 14—Dr. Chapman's concession—Triple consecration not proveable—Same doctrine sustained by quotations from Firmillian, Tertullian, Eutychius, Cranmer, bishop of St. Asaph, Therelby and Cox, Mr. Francis Mann, Bishop G. Dowman, Stillingfleet, Gieseler, Bishop White—First link in the chain of succession wanting.

HAVING proved that bishops and presbyters were the same order of ministers in the primitive church, it remains for us to inquire,

2. Into the *powers* possessed by them. In conducting this part of the discussion, it is important that we should define what is meant by *powers*. We mean, then, simply, *ecclesiastical* powers—such as are peculiar to ministers of the Lord Jesus, and are necessary for the integrity, government, and well being of the church of Christ. My present object is to prove that these presbyters originally possessed the power of ordination.

To maintain this position, our first appeal is to the Sacred Scriptures. That the *apostles* received their first commission from Jesus Christ, the proper foundation and head of the church, I suppose none will question; and hence we have no account, that I am aware of, that any of those "twelve," first chosen by Jesus Christ, were ever ordained by other than himself. To them he therefore said, "Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and *ordained* you, that ye should bring forth much fruit." So it is said by St. Mark, "And he *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." Whether any particular ceremony was used by Jesus Christ in ordaining these "twelve" to the sacred office to which they were called, we are not informed; nor is it, I apprehend, a matter of any consequence for us to know, since whatever Jesus did as to their ordination, was done by him as the supreme Head of his church, and not in the ordinary method.

The Apostle Paul, however, was not of this number; and although he was as much called of Jesus Christ to preach his gospel, and to perform all the functions of an apostle, as were the "twelve," yet as he was, as he expresses it, "born out of due time,"

that is, after the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven, he could not have been ordained in the same manner that they were; and hence we read of his consecration by the hands of *prophets* and *teachers*. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and LAID THEIR HANDS on them, they sent them away," Acts xiii, 1--3. I know of no other account of the consecration of St. Paul, by the hands of men, to the work of the ministry; and it is somewhat remarkable that not one of "the twelve" assisted in this work; whence we may conclude, that others beside the apostles were in the habit of administering the ceremony of ordination. This is furthermore a proof of what I before stated, that a body of bishops or presbyters, as it is to be presumed these were such, though they are not designated by that appellation, might consecrate a minister to an office superior to themselves.

I am aware that Bishop Onderdonk, and other high Episcopalians, deny that this was a regular consecration of St. Paul to the Christian ministry, but only a sort of installation to a special missionary work. To sustain this position, they tell us that St. Paul was called and ordained by Jesus Christ himself, and therefore needed not to be set apart by the hands of men. But, is not every true minister called by the Holy Spirit to his sacred work, and, in this sense, ordained by Christ himself? It is certain that St. Paul was

never otherwise ordained by Jesus Christ than by being thus inwardly called by the Holy Spirit, for he never had any personal intercourse with Jesus while the latter sojourned among men, after the conversion of the former to the Christian faith. How then could he have been otherwise ordained by Jesus Christ, than by that voice from heaven, which assured him that "he had appeared unto him for this purpose, to make him a minister and witness of those things which he had seen and heard?"

But, even allowing all that is contended for by the asserters of high episcopal power and prerogative, it militates not against the proposition for which I contend, namely, that the power of ordination was originally vested in the presbytery. It must be allowed, however, that here was all the "form and circumstance" usually attendant upon the most formal consecration, if, indeed, it be not the very exemplar whence the manner of consecration is taken.* They

* According to the usages of the English and Protestant Episcopal Churches, *three* bishops are essential to render the ordination of another bishop valid. And this is in conformity to the practice of primitive times. Now, whence did this practice originate? I know no precedent in Scripture,—no example upon record, except this consecration of the Apostle Paul. And I consider this no small evidence in favor of the position that this was so considered by the church at that time, and in the days immediately subsequent.

There is, also, in this transaction, another particular, from which the orderly practice of having the candidates for orders presented to the ordainers by a third person may have been taken. In chapter ix, 27, it is said that "Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." This introduction of the apostle was designed to calm the fearful apprehensions of the disciples and apostles, by

fasted, prayed, and laid their hands upon them, and then sent them away to preach to the Gentiles and to form churches. It is worthy of special notice, and not a little confirmatory of the opinion that this was a regular consecration of St. Paul to the full ministry, that he set out immediately upon an extensive work, and was thereafter employed, not only in preaching the gospel, but in establishing and edifying churches; in which peculiar work we do not find that he was employed before this time. For though immediately after his conversion he went away into Arabia, we have no account of what he did, whether he was employed in preaching the gospel, or was under the tuition of some skilful master in fitting himself more perfectly for the great work to which he had been called by the Holy Ghost. The next we hear of him is his coming up to Jerusalem, when the fears of the

assuring them that he was now worthy of their confidence and fellowship. Whence, probably, arose the practice at the present time of having the candidates for orders presented by one of the elders present, in the following manner:—

"I present unto you these persons present to be ordained elders." Or, when a bishop is about to be consecrated, he is thus presented by two elders:—

"We present unto you this holy man to be ordained a bishop."

In Acts xiii, 2, it is said, "As they ministered unto the Lord, and FASTED;" so also in the regulations of our discipline respecting the manner of receiving preachers, it is said, "After solemn *fasting* and *prayer*," &c.

I have adduced these particulars for the purpose of showing the high probability there is, that this induction of St. Paul into the ministry, was, as is stated in the text, the exemplar, whence the ceremonies now observed preparatory to the laying on of hands were taken: and that therefore they confirm the opinion that this was a regular and canonical consecration, performed in obedience to the command of the Holy Ghost.

disciples were excited at beholding him who had been such a furious persecutor of the Christians, and was introduced by Barnabas to the apostles, Peter and James, (see Acts ix, 26–30, and Gal. i, 19,) as one whom the Lord had called to be his apostle, and thereby calmed the apprehensions of the fearful disciples. Here, in consequence of the persecution raised against him on account of the bold manner in which he preached Jesus unto the "Grecians," the brethren took him and conducted him to *Tarsus*, his native city. The very next account we have of St. Paul is the one above recited, when he came to Antioch in company with Barnabas, and, with him, was thus solemnly consecrated to the work of the ministry.

Now, taking all these facts together, we have a plain narrative of the events of this part of St. Paul's history:—1. Of his conversion. 2. His announcement of his faith in Christ to the Jews at Damascus. 3. His departure to Arabia, where he spent probably about three years. 4. His assaying to join himself with the disciples at Jerusalem. 5. His introduction to Peter and James. 6. The bold manner in which he preached Christ at Jerusalem, and the rancorous opposition of the Jews, and of his consequent secretion at Tarsus. 7. His next appearance at Antioch, where he was, by the special command of God, consecrated in the manner before described. He then launches forth upon the turbulent sea of this world, and is zealously employed as a "fisher of men," whom he brings into the church, and builds them up in all holy living. But why did he not enter more fully upon this work before? Manifestly, because he had not been recognized by those "who were in Christ before him," to whom he had never been introduced,

and received from them the "right hand of fellowship," as a "fellow laborer;" but was now, by the body of elders who were assembled at Antioch, being presented to them by his faithful friend and coadjutor, Barnabas, regularly, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands, inducted into the order and office of the Christian ministry. Indeed, I cannot perceive in what more formal and solemn manner any man could be set apart for this sacred work.

But as before suggested, allowing that this was not a consecration, *per se*, (of itself,) to the work of the Christian ministry, it still supports our position. If he was already fully inducted into the apostolic office, and had all the official sanction which was necessary, as our opponents contend, he was then, at that very time and place, among the highest officers ever known to the Christian church—having, indeed, supreme rule over all its members, people, deacons, and presbyters. Now let us see to what a sad alternative our opponents are driven by their own assumptions. Here was an apostle, made and ordained such by Jesus Christ himself, as they contend, exercising of right a supreme authority over the whole church wherever he came, condescending, nevertheless, to receive the imposition of hands from his *inferiors* in order and office, for some special work! I think they must now be content to bind themselves with the cords of their own making. They must admit either, 1. That before this St. Paul was, at least, no higher in authority than were those three who laid their hands on him, and thereby made him their superior; or, 2. Holding fast their assumption, allow that, in this instance, Paul "the greater was blessed of the lesser," and thereby nullify all their pretensions to the divine right of a

third order as essential to bless by imposition of hands; or, 3. They must give up all pretensions to a third order as being thus essential, by allowing that these elders—for they certainly could have been no higher in order—made St. Paul only equal to themselves. But as this last supposition would be contrary to matter of fact, as all know that he was emphatically an apostle, they must adopt one or the other of the former suppositions, either of which is fatal to their cause.

From the whole, therefore, I conclude, that St. Paul received his credentials as an accredited minister in this presbyterial college at Antioch, from the hands of men over whom he afterward exercised a spiritual and ministerial jurisdiction; and therefore a body of elders, or of "prophets and teachers," may impart authority to an equal to become their superior in office. This, therefore, as I have before remarked, is so far from being an unusual thing, that it occurred, as it seems in the present case, at the very foundation of the Christian church. But the fact more especially established in the passage before us is, that the right of ordination was originally in the body of presbyters, else these usurped that which did not belong to them.

Another proof of this position is found in 1 Tim. iv, 14, where St. Paul says to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the PRESBYTERY." It is true, that in the second epistle, the apostle exhorts Timothy to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." There need be, however, no discrepancy between these two passages. They may be reconciled either

by supposing that St. Paul himself ordained Timothy to the office of a deacon, and that he was afterward consecrated to the office of an elder by the hands of presbyters; or that when he was thus set apart, St. Paul acted as president of the council, assisted in the ceremony by the presbyters. Both of these usages are sanctioned in those churches which admit ministers, by the ceremony of consecration, first to the office of deacons, and secondly to elders.

With these plain and undeniable examples before us, proving most incontestably that the body of presbyters did administer the rite of ordination, what shall we say of the following solemn declaration of Dr. Chapman, the modern advocate of the divine institution of diocesan episcopacy? He says, vol. i, p. 6,—

"If there could be found one solitary example of presbyterian ordination in the sacred volume, I should be well pleased to ascribe to it the same force and authority which now attaches to that which is episcopal."

The examples, not merely a solitary one, but two very eminent and perspicuous ones, are given above; and until he can set them aside, by something more solid than his flimsy criticism upon 1 Tim. iv, 14, which I shall examine hereafter, I hold him to his promise, which he has made with so much pleasure, that he will "ascribe to it the same force and authority," which he thinks belong to his episcopal ordination. And I will here remark, that every quotation which he has made from the primitive fathers, is perfectly compatible with what has been said respecting the parity of bishops and presbyters—only keeping in remembrance the distinction I have made between *order* and *office*. But as he has contended so earnestly

for *three* distinct orders, *jure divino*, made such by *three* separate consecrations by *prayer and imposition of hands*, I will humbly submit to him the following proposition:—If he will bring a solitary text in all the Bible, or from any Christian writer during the first two centuries of the Christian era, which proves that any one minister was thus consecrated *three times* by a *third order*, first *a deacon*, secondly *an elder*, and thirdly *a bishop*, I will promise, if his church will accept of me, to submit to a consecration by the hands of one of his bishops. It must be observed, that I do not say that such consecrations are wrong or unscriptural; but I deny that there is any express Scripture warrant for them; and that therefore their utility and propriety must rest on other grounds than positive precept or a recorded example.

But if he cannot produce this express warrant from the sacred Scripture, so far as the divine institution of his theory of episcopacy is concerned, his boasting is silenced for ever; and we are left in full possession of the doctrine of expediency. I hope therefore, from his numerous professions of candor and Christian charity, and for which I am willing to give him full credit, that he will either come forward with his proofs, "strong as holy writ," or give us a practical illustration of that candor, and renounce his doctrine which claims for the Protestant Episcopal Church the exclusive right of ordination.

If any reader doubts whether Dr. Chapman does set up such a claim as this, let him read the following:—"It certainly does lead me to the conclusion, that ministers, who are not episcopally ordained, are acting as such, without any lawful authority," p. 20. This, surely, is a sweeping declaration; but is, "like

the chaff before the summer's threshing floor," in presence of the above Scripture examples, and those which follow from the primitive fathers, and other testimonies which are here, and will be hereafter produced.

Having thus adduced Scripture authority in favor of our position, let us now inquire whether the practice of subsequent periods of the church corroborates the interpretation we have given of these scriptures. In respect to ordination itself, there is but little said in the writings of the primitive fathers respecting it; yet that little plainly proves that it was done by presbyters. Indeed there was no need of asserting in so many words that presbyters did ordain others, because as bishops and presbyters were of the same order, whatever was done by one, in virtue of his ecclesiastical order, was done by the other; so that, if bishops administered ordination, the presbyters did the same; and as this was generally understood as of right belonging to them, it was quite unnecessary to mention it as if it were a matter of doubtful disputation. However, we have some testimonies even to this point. Thus saith *Firmillian* :—

"All power and grace is constituted in the church, where seniors preside, who have the power of baptizing, confirming, and *ordaining*." What these *seniors* were may be seen from a parallel passage in *Tertullian*, where he says that, "In the ecclesiastical courts, *approved elders preside*, not distinguished for their opulence, but worth of character."*

* These numbers, I perceive, have attracted the notice of some writers in the "Churchman," and particularly of "Diakonos." Though I have read his strictures, I did not myself think them worthy of any reply, until a friend informed

But the passage more in point than any other, is that from *Eutychius*, patriarch of Alexandria, "who expressly affirms that the twelve presbyters, constituted

me that a gentleman of some reading in the Protestant Episcopal Church expressed a conviction that Diakonos had weakened the force of some of my reasonings. And thinking that perhaps others may be under similar apprehensions, I submit the following remarks, which will show, at least, the frivolous character of the objections which are made to my positions.

To any writer who will, in a fair and manly style, meet my main position, and attempt its overthrow, a respectful attention will be given; but to those who, like the writer in question, will evade the main point, and deal in such ridiculous cavils, I shall not feel myself bound to make any farther reply, nor attempt a more labored refutation.

In commenting on my fifth number, this writer has selected the quotation from *Firmillian*, and presumes to think he has overthrown my position, *that elders did ordain others*, and says with great modesty, he has "used me up," and that unless I "bring something more to my purpose than this, my cause must sink." Really this is amusing! "Unless I bring something more!" Why, in this very number and the subsequent one, I have brought no less than *thirteen* other authorities all in support of this same proposition, *that presbyters did ordain other presbyters, and even superior ministers*, not *one* of which does this sapient writer deign to notice—and then gravely says, as if he had fairly won the day, because forsooth he erroneously thinks he has slain one of my witnesses, "Unless I bring something more, my cause must sink." If indeed such a feather will sink it, it is not worthy of an effort to keep it afloat.

Now I would ask him, to carry on the metaphor with which he has furnished me, to grapple with only *one* more of the anchors with which my barque lies safely moored; I mean that furnished by *Eutychius*, patriarch of Alexandria; and if he can fairly raise this from its anchoring ground, he will deserve the thanks of those for whom he writes. Or if he thinks this too much of a Herculean task for his strength while in his "transition state," let him grasp hold of Bishop White, of Cranmer, Therelby, Redman, Mr. F. Mann, Bishop G. Dowman, Stillingfleet, Mosheim, Gieseler, or Wesley. When he has mastered

by Mark, upon the vacancy of the see, did choose out of their number, one to be head over the rest, and the other eleven did lay their hands upon him, and

these, if he still cry out for "something more," he may find it in the long line of succession which lies in shattered fragments along the road from Rome in the eighth, down to Canterbury in the sixteenth century. When he has collected these, and put them together so firmly that there shall be no danger of their falling to pieces under their own weight, it will be time enough to furnish him with fresh materials.

The fact is, this Diakonos began his strictures before he heard what I had to say, and went on with some of his numbers under the false belief that my object was to invalidate the ordinations of the Protestant Episcopal Church, whereas nothing was more foreign from my thoughts. And we all know what Solomon says of a man who "answereth a matter before he heareth it," and considering all the circumstances of the case, I believe no man, who has heard and considered both sides of the question, will blame me for thinking he was at least *unwise* in replying to a matter before he understood or even heard it. Probably, however, an apology may be found for him in his eagerness to ingratiate himself into the favor and confidence of his new friends.

Since the above was written, I perceive on looking at another number of the "Churchman," an abortive attempt has been made by this same writer to invalidate the testimony of *Eutychius*, by saying that because he flourished in the tenth century, he is not to be depended upon. But let us in the first place hear what Mosheim has said of him.

"Of the many examples we might mention to prove the truth of this assertion," namely, that "Egypt produced writers who in genius and learning were nowise inferior to the most eminent of the Grecian literati," "we shall confine ourselves to that of *Eutychius*, bishop of Alexandria, who cultivated the sciences of physic and theology with the greatest success, and cast a new light upon them both by his excellent writings." And in another place the same historian says:—

"Among the Arabians, no author acquired a higher reputation than *Eutychius*, bishop of Alexandria, whose *Annals*, with several other productions of his pen, are still extant." To sustain these assertions, Mosheim quotes Albert. Fabricii

made him patriarch." This shows, not only that the presbyters ordained, but that they actually ordained one of their own number to be their *superior* in office.

Bibliographia Antiquaria, p. 179. Also Eusebii Renaudoti *Historia Patriarch. Alexandr.* p. 347. See Mosh. Cent. x, Par. ii, ch. i, ii.

Here then was a patriarch living in the very place, and occupying the episcopal chair of the very church whose *Annals* he wrote, and which Annals Mosheim tells us were extant in his time; and it is from these same Annals, called by Stillingfleet, *Origines Ecclesia Alexandriane*, (Origin of the Alexandrian Church,) which the learned Selden published in Arabic, that the above testimony is quoted. Who more likely to ascertain the facts in the case than the very man who lived, taught, and wrote in the very city and church whose annals he wrote? Had he not the most easy access to the archives of the church whose overseer he was?

But, says our objector, this testimony of Eutychius is not to be relied on, because he lived in the *tenth* century! Verily this is an age of discovery! How long did Moses live after the events had come to pass which he narrates? Josephus must be muzzled because he happened to live upward of four thousand years after Adam was taken from the ground! Indeed, according to this rule, by a summary process all the historians, except those who have confined their narratives to their own times, must pass under the knife of excision, as pseudo annalists, and therefore worthy of death! Rollin, Hume, the authors of the Universal History, Mosheim, Milner, Hawes, Gregory, Dupin, and a thousand others, must all go by the board, as unworthy of credit, because they wrote of times so long anterior to their own days!

I wonder to what historian this defender of the succession will go for proof of his doctrine of an unbroken line. Will he be able to find any one of these apostolic successors who has lived long enough to have seen with his own eyes every bishop seated in the chair of episcopal succession, after having had the oil of consecration poured upon his head for the *third* time, in order to make him a canonical bishop? And at the same time did he watch so narrowly as to be able to affirm positively that there has not been, in a single instance, a deception; but that every man of them was ordained first a deacon, then a priest,

This fact, together with the circumstances which accompanied the ordination of St. Paul, will fully justify the act of Mr. Wesley in the consecration of Dr. Coke, as superintendent of the Methodist Church in America. But more of this hereafter.

It may be satisfactory to the reader to have the opinions of some Episcopal writers upon this subject. Among the English reformers there were none more eminent for learning, for moderation, and for sound judgment, than Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury. It seems that the king propounded a number of questions to him, in conjunction with several other high dignitaries of the church, respecting the settling of certain questions of church order, for better regulating the "laws of the realm." Among other questions was the following:—

"Whether bishops or priests were first? and if the priests were first, then the priests made the bishop." To this Cranmer answers,—

and *thirdly* a bishop? All this must have been done, according to this man's rule of evidence, or the narrative is vitiated.

But it is not surprising that an attempt should be made to set aside this testimony of Eutychius, for it is a death blow to the doctrine of the *essentiality* of a third order to a valid ordination. And hence the most unreasonable demand, that I must prove that Eutychius did in truth express himself thus. I have produced the witness, *plain*, *positive*. Let them, if they can, invalidate the truth of his evidence. I have moreover corroborated the truth of this testimony by that of a number of others, all of whom testify to the general fact, namely, that *presbyters did ordain other presbyters*, and also, in many instances, *superior ministers in office*. Can they invalidate this testimony? They know that they cannot. I lay it down, therefore, as a principle *ab initio*, that the right of ordination was in the college of presbyters, and that they exercised it *when*, *where*, and as *long* as they pleased; and that, whenever they were divested of it, it was either a voluntary act of their own, or was taken from them by force.

"The bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things; but both one in office at the beginning of Christ's kingdom."

It appears also that the bishop of St. *Asaph*, *Therelby*, *Redman*, and *Cox*, were all of the same opinion with the archbishop, that bishops and presbyters were of the same order; and the two latter expressly cite the opinion of *Jerome*, with approbation.

Mr. Francis Mann, in his defence of the ordination of ministers beyond the sea, though he held that the order of bishops was above that of presbyters in the primitive church, being of apostolic usage, and in this sense *jure divino*, yet allowed that it was not *essential* to the integrity of a Christian church, but held that "ministers are lawfully ordained by mere presbyters." His concluding words are these;—

"But if by *jure divino* you understand a law and commandment of God, binding all Christian churches universally, perpetually, unchangeably, and with such absolute necessity that no other form of regiment may in any case be admitted, in this sense, neither may we grant it, nor yet can you prove it to be *jure divino*,"—that, is of *divine right* or appointment.

Bishop G. Dowman expresses himself to the same effect, in nearly the same words. And these were all high Episcopalian writers, and strenuous defenders of the hierarchy of England; but they defended it not as a thing essential to the existence of a Christian church, universally and perpetually binding upon all churches, at all times and under all circumstances, as does the writer I have quoted at the head of these numbers, and as Dr. Chapman and other rigid Protestant Episcopalians of this country, now hold it to be. As to Dr. Chapman, in his zeal to maintain the

honor of his church, and its exclusive privilege of conferring orders upon ministers, he has misrepresented, no doubt unintentionally, the opinions of some of the reformers, no less than he has mistaken, as I think, the meaning of Scripture and the fathers, as I shall attempt to show hereafter.

In quoting the opinions of writers in the English Church, I may be permitted to add that of *Bishop Stillingfleet*, who has given evidence in his *Irenicum*, of a most diligent and impartial research into the records of the church on this subject, and from whose learned book I have borrowed the last two quotations. But why should I quote any particular passage of his book, since his entire performance is taken up in a most successful attempt to establish the fact that bishops and presbyters were identical as to order, and that therefore they possessed the inherent right of consecration before their liberties were restrained by episcopal encroachments, or by their own voluntary act, for the sake, as they thought, of securing greater peace and unanimity? Yet, as the judgment of such a man, after a most laborious investigation, should have great weight in settling controversies of this sort, let us hear him in his own words. He says,—

"In the first primitive church the presbyters all acted in common for the welfare of the church, and either did or might *ordain for others* to the *same authority with themselves*; because the intrinsical power of order is equal in them, and in those who were afterward appointed governors over presbyters. And the collocation of orders doth come from the power of order, and not merely from the power of jurisdiction. It being likewise fully acknowledged by the schoolmen that bishops are not superior to presbyters,

as to the power of order." See Irenicum, pages 273, 392, 412.

Gieseler, in his *Text Book of Ecclesiastical History*, recently translated from the German into English, says, vol. i, p. 56, that, "at the head of each of the new churches were the *elders*, all officially of equal rank, though in several instances a peculiar authority seems to have been conceded to some one individual from personal considerations." And in a note he says that it is "remarkable that even the papal canonist, *Jo. Paul. Lancelottus*, (about 1570,) introduces the passage of *Jerome*,* without any attempt to refute it. The distinction between the institutio divina et ecclesiastica was of less importance in the middle ages than in the modern catholic church, and this view of the original identity of bishops and presbyters was of no practical importance. It was not until after the reformation that it was attacked. Since this all catholics, as well as English Episcopalians, maintain an original difference between bishops and presbyters." And we must now add that this fanciful distinction is also maintained by Protestant Episcopalians as stoutly as if the salvation of souls depended upon the settling of this debateable point on their side of the question. I must defer some other authorities in support of our views, to another number. Among others to which reference will be made, is that of the late Bishop White, of Pennsylvania, who published a pamphlet on this subject in 1783, to the sentiments of which he declared, in his Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the second edition of which was published under the author's own direc-

* See this passage in Jerome, in a former number.

tion in 1836, a short time previous to his death, that he still adhered.

Though these human testimonies are not, in themselves, decisive of the point in question, yet they must have great weight when it is considered that they were delivered by men in favor of English Episcopacy, and in the presence of their contemporaries of an opposite sentiment. And they ought to have the effect to moderate, at least, the pretensions of those who are so forward in excluding all churches, other than their own, from a participation of a valid Christian ministry. But as these latter gentlemen lay such stress upon the unbroken succession of episcopacy, *in their own sense of the word*, it is intended, before this discussion closes, to investigate that claim in the light of historical facts; by which I apprehend it will be found that if it be not, indeed, "a fable," it is at least an assumption resting on no solid foundation.

Lest, however, any should mistake my meaning in relation to this topic, let it be recollected that I do not take it upon me to say that there has not always been an order of ministers in the church, *called bishops*, but that there has not been such an order to whom the *exclusive* right of ordination belonged, and who were *diocesan* bishops, in the present acceptation of that term. Indeed, allowing the truth of our position, that in the apostolic days presbyters did ordain ministers both equal and superior to themselves, then it follows that there was a time when no such claims were made in behalf of an exclusive power of ordination in a superior order; and hence their chain is defective, inasmuch as it wants the very first link to make it complete.

NUMBER VI.

Presbyter sometimes used as a title of office—Other testimonies in proof of the identity of bishops and presbyters—Mosheim—Bishop White—Hooker—Archbishop Usher—Bishop White's unaltered opinion—Bishops of England approved of his views—Mr. Wesley's views the same—The question submitted.

THOUGH I might here rest the cause as to the identity of bishops and presbyters, and as to the power of ordination originally resting in them, yet I think it expedient to fortify our position by some additional testimonies. Before, however, I produce these, I think it needful to make one or two remarks to prevent mistakes. From what was said in a former number respecting the difference between bishops and presbyters, some might be led to conclude that the appellation of presbyter was never used as a term of office, or as an ecclesiastical designation. This by no means follows; for though the word itself comes from a root which signifies *age*, and was therefore used to designate those persons because it fitly expressed that dignity of character which grows out of wisdom acquired by a long experience, yet it is also used as a term of official standing in the church. Thus, in Luke xxii, 66, and Acts xxii, 5, and several other places where the word occurs, it undoubtedly means the members of the Jewish sanhedrin, who exercised both a civil and religious jurisdiction over the people, and were therefore so denominated from their official station, whether they were old or young in years. And there can be little doubt that from this use of the term among the Jews, it was transferred by the Christians to the venerable officers to whom was committed, in imitation of the elders who composed the sanhedrin,

the government of the Christian church. Hence 2 John, verse 1; 1 Peter v, 1; and 3 John, verse 1, it is applied to the apostles themselves. And in the passage of St. Peter, we have one of the strongest proofs that can be found that the title of *επισκοπος*, overseer or bishop, did not designate a higher order in the church than a presbyter; for in this very passage the apostle calls himself *συμπρεσθυτερος*, that is, a *joint elder* with those to whom he wrote, and at the same time, in the second verse, he charges these very persons to take the *επισκοπουντες*, the *oversight* "of the flock of God," thereby expressing their peculiar work as elders by a term indicative of their office. This text, therefore, should for ever put to silence those who contend that because some of the first ministers were called overseers, they held a rank superior to elders, except so far as has been already explained. The apostle indeed addresses those persons as his equals in order, being no doubt among the first of the primitive Christian teachers.

Believing, however, this point to be unassailable by our opponents, I will now proceed to adduce a few other testimonies in favor of the position, that the power of ordination was originally in the college of presbyters. The next we will cite, as corroborative of the testimony of Gieseler, is Mosheim, who is an ecclesiastical historian of fidelity and celebrity, equal, if, indeed, not superior, to any who have written the annals of the church. Speaking of the church during the first century, he says:—

"Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations" (which he had before described) "in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to

maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty, by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was, at the first, styled the *angel* of the church to which he belonged, but was afterward distinguished by the name of bishop or inspector, a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend the affairs of the church. It is highly probable that the church of Jerusalem, grown considerably numerous, and deprived of the ministry of the apostles, who were gone to instruct other nations, was the first who chose a president or bishop.

"Let none, however, confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For, though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second centuries, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which at that time was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted, not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*."

Such were the primitive bishops or presbyters

How unlike many of those who profess to be their successors! It is true, Mosheim does not say any thing respecting their having the power of ordination; but it follows of course if they were the rulers of the church, that they also attended to other matters belonging to their office, among which was doubtless that of ordination. We must not forget, however, that over all these the apostles, and, in their absence, the itinerating evangelists, exercised a general oversight.

The next evidence which I shall bring forward in favor of the truth we are endeavoring to establish, is the late Bishop White. At the close of the revolutionary war, before the independence of these United States had been acknowledged, the clergy of the English Church not meeting with encouragement from the bishops of England in their application for an American episcopacy, the Rev. Mr. White, then a presbyter of that church, wrote a pamphlet, entitled, "The Case of the Episcopal Church in the United States Considered." In this pamphlet, which was published in 1783, the author proposed the electing and consecrating a bishop by the hands of presbyters, pleading the lawfulness of it from the exigencies of the times. From this pamphlet some extracts will be taken.

I am glad to find the opinion I have before expressed, respecting the unscripturalness of submitting to the secular authority the power of appointing bishops, confirmed in the pamphlet before me. The author says, p. 9, "In England, the bishops are appointed by the civil authority, which was a usurpation of the crown at the Norman conquest." This usurpation, thus exercised, was assigned as one of the principal reasons why the episcopal churches in this country should proceed to elect a bishop, and to organize

themselves under him without waiting for the succession, and thus to separate themselves also from the English Church; for, up to this time, the Episcopal churches in this country were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of London; but, as the author says, "All former jurisdiction over the churches being withdrawn," he now urges them to form a separate and distinct organization.

After proposing a general outline of a plan for this organization, Bishop White proceeds to say:—

"Now, on the one hand, to depart from episcopacy would be giving up a leading characteristic of the communion; which, however indifferently considered as to *divine appointment*, might be productive of all the evils generally attending changes of this sort. On the other hand, by *delaying to adopt measures* for the continuance of the ministry, the very existence of the churches is hazarded, and duties of positive and indispensable obligation are neglected."

Here it is manifest that the author waived all claim to the "divine appointment" of episcopacy, as then held by the English Church; while from the "positive and indispensable obligation" of other duties, by which he unquestionably means to include baptism and the Lord's supper, he thinks it right to provide for their performance by securing an episcopacy through the medium of presbyterial ordination. To secure this object with as little delay as possible, he says:—

"The conduct meant to be recommended, as founded on the preceding sentiments, is to include in the proposed frame of government, a general approbation of episcopacy, and a declaration of an intention to procure the succession as soon as conveniently may be;

but in the meantime to *carry the plan into effect without waiting for the succession.*"

And with a view to reconcile his brethren to the moderate episcopacy which he recommended, differing in divers respects from the lofty pretensions of the English hierarchy, the author gives the sanction of his name to the very doctrine we have advanced respecting the restricted power of the bishops. He says :—

"In the early ages of the church, it was customary to debate and determine in a general concourse of all Christians in the same city, among whom the *bishop* was no more than *president.*" And hence he remarks, that to relinquish the "worship of God, and the instruction and reformation of the people, from a scrupulous adherence to episcopacy, is sacrificing the *substance* for the *ceremony.*"

In this sentence the author must mean by episcopacy, that which was to be derived only from the regular succession; for he was pleading with all his might for one of another character, and *that* he calls a mere empty ceremony in comparison to more substantial matters. Is not this an utter abandonment of the divine right of diocesan episcopacy? For surely this respectable presbyter could not have called a divine institution a mere ceremonial thing, contrasted with the substance, which consisted in the "instruction and reformation of the people." He furthermore allows that this doctrine of episcopal succession, as now so strenuously contended for by Pro Ecclesia, Dr. Chapman, and others, is at best a "disputed point." His words are :—

"But are the acknowledged ordinances of Christ's holy religion to be suspended for years, perhaps as long as the present generation shall continue, out of

delicacy to a *disputed* point, and that relating only to *externals?*" "All the obligations of conformity to the divine ordinances, all the arguments which prove the connection between public worship and the morals of the people, combine to urge the adopting some speedy measures: if such as have been above recommended should be adopted, and the episcopal succession afterward obtained, any supposed imperfections of the intermediate ordinations might, if it were judged proper, be supplied *without acknowledging their nullity*, by a *conditional* ordination resembling that of *conditional baptism* in the liturgy; the above was an expedient proposed by Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Patrick, Stillingfleet, and others, at the revolution, and had been actually practised in Ireland by Archbishop Bramhall." This passage speaks for itself. But the following is still stronger in support of our views:—

"It will not be difficult to prove that a temporary departure from episcopacy, in the present instance, would be warranted by her (the Church of England) doctrines, by her practice, and by the principles on which episcopal government is asserted."

He then proceeds to the proof of this postulate, by quotations from her articles of religion, her canons, and the preface to the Book of Common Prayer; by which he most evidently makes it appear that the Church of England herself did not consider episcopal ordination by a third order *essential* to the validity of a Christian ministry. And to sustain himself in his opinions, he next refers to the practice of that same church, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, one of the SHE HEADS of the church! He says,

"Many of the exiles"—who had fled into Germany and Geneva during the persecutions of Protestants

under the reign of Mary, another SHE HEAD of the church!—"returned to their native land; some of whom, during their absence, had been ordained according to the customs of the countries where they had resided; these were admitted without re-ordination to preach and hold benefices: one of them was promoted to a deanery"—"there existed an extraordinary occasion, not provided for in the institutions of common use, the exigency of the case seems to have been considered; and there followed a toleration, if not an implied approbation, of a departure in that instance from episcopal ordination."

Not to multiply extracts unnecessarily, I will present the reader with only one or two more. The following shows that the author wrote under the inspiration which earnest sincerity always inspires. After quoting the opinion of Bishop Hoadly, an eminent English bishop, who wrote against Dr. Calamy, a divine-right Episcopalian, Bishop White says:—

"Now, if the form of church government rest on no other foundation than ancient and apostolic *practice*, it is humbly submitted to consideration, whether Episcopalians will not be thought scarcely deserving the name of Christians, should they, rather than consent to a temporary deviation, abandon every ordinance of positive and divine appointment."

After quoting from Hooker, who is considered the oracle of the high-toned Episcopalians, and other learned writers of that communion, in support of his views, he presents the following from Archbishop Usher, in proof of the validity of presbyterial ordination. In a letter to Dr. Barnard, he writes thus:—"*In places where bishops cannot be had, the ordination of presbyters stands valid.*" On this ground,

allowing that we had no other, I could frame a complete justification of the proceedings of Wesley in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For the reader will recollect that all these arguments and testimonies are brought forward in justification of presbyters conferring office, by their act of consecration, on a bishop, and thus creating an officer *superior* to themselves. How else could the *episcopacy*, in their sense of the word, have been kept up by this temporary deviation from the accustomed method?

It may, however, be asserted by some, that Bishop White, by going to England to obtain episcopal ordination, gave proof that he afterward altered his mind. I should myself be inclined to this opinion had I not his own words to the contrary. I have now lying before me the Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church, compiled by this same venerable man, whose catholic spirit, while it adorned the church over which he so long and worthily presided, rebukes the bigots who are now springing up, and pleading with such pertinacity for the exclusive right of ordination. In these Memoirs he alludes to this pamphlet, which was published in 1783, no less than fifty-three years before the last edition of the Memoirs was published under his own supervision: he says,—

"After the years that have passed, there does not appear to his mind" (the bishop speaks in the third, instead of first person) "any cause to retract the leading sentiments of that performance."

Nay, it appears from what the bishop says farther on, that the sentiments of the pamphlet were approved by the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and those other bishops of the Church of England who were concerned in his consecration. His words are:—

"Before the author's subsequent visit to England, he knew that his pamphlet had been in the hands of the archbishop of York—and he did not express any dissatisfaction with the pamphlet, or with the author on its account; nor has any other English prelate, so far as is known to him."—(See p. 90 of the Memoirs.)

This, it seems, was published under the author's own inspection, a short time before he died; for the preface to this second edition, written by Bishop White himself, is dated April, 1836. It would appear, therefore, that after maturing the subject for not less than fifty-three years, his opinion remained unaltered. But this is not all. According to the extracts above made, it appears that the bishops of England, eighteen of whom were consulted respecting the granting his consecration, were of the same opinion; for he says that the pamphlet had been sent through the American minister, Mr. Adams, to the archbishop of Canterbury, and that none of these prelates made the least objection to any of its doctrines, nor yet to their author; but actually ordained him, *knowing* that he held these sentiments, *purely Wesleyan* as they are, at the time of his consecration.

We may therefore consider this a most manifest proof that the episcopate of England, high as they are in official dignity, in consequence of their supposed apostolic descent, approved of presbyterial ordination as valid, under certain circumstances.

To suppose the contrary—that they did not approve of the sentiments of the pamphlet and of its author, is to suppose that they solemnly consecrated a man to the high office of a bishop, whom they knew to be heretical in his opinions on a most important point of ecclesiastical economy. What an impeachment

of their sincerity would be such a supposition! The inevitable result, then, of this whole business is, that both Bishop White himself, and the bishops of England who were concerned in his consecration, approved the sentiments of the pamphlet from which I have quoted, and that the former died in this faith.

This is a result to which I hardly thought of being conducted when I commenced these remarks upon the high pretensions of Pro Ecclesia; and I think that, all things considered, it must be granted that while his signature represents him as pleading *for* the church, mine is equally appropriate, which is expressive of the *church* itself, setting up its own justification against his attacks upon this feature of its government.

I shall conclude my extracts from human authorities, from a man who is not a whit behind any heretofore referred to, in learning, in his attachment to the church, in piety, or in the extent of his information or soundness of his conclusions: I mean the *Rev. John Wesley.* By these it will be seen that in setting apart Doctor Coke to the office of a superintendent, and preparing a plan for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he acted under the conviction of a well-informed judgment, and not from the biases of an enfeebled mind, or the persuasions of a few ambitious individuals, who were anxious to have the sceptre of Methodist episcopacy transmitted to their hands. In his Journal, under date of January 20, 1746, he says:—

"I have read over Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church. In spite of the vehement prejudices of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught. But if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are essentially of

one order; and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent on all others."

Now let it be remembered that this declaration was made *thirty-eight* years before he presumed to exercise the right of ordination; at a time when he had as little thought of ever doing so, as he had of transplanting himself to America: for though the "vehement prejudices of his education" were in some measure conquered, prudential considerations prevented him, until near the close of his life, from departing, in this respect, from the established usages of his church.

In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Clarke, dated July 3d, 1756, ten years after the above extract was written, he has these words,—

"As to my own judgment, I still believe the episcopal form of church government to be Scriptural and apostolical—I mean well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is *prescribed* in Scripture, I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicum.* I think he has unanswerably proved, that *neither Christ nor his apostles prescribe any particular form of church government;* and that the plea of the divine right of episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive church." How like the sentiments of Bishop White, and those English bishops who consecrated him to the office of a bishop, are these of Mr. Wesley! And yet the latter, in the estimation of some of their zealous followers, is a heresiarch in this point of church order and government!

Two months after the above was written he thus expresses himself in a letter to the same gentleman:—

"Concerning diocesan episcopacy, there are several

questions I should be glad to have answered: 1. Where is it *prescribed* in Scripture? 2. How does it appear that the apostles *settled it in all the churches they planted?* 3. How does it appear that they so settled it in any, as to make it of perpetual obligation? It is allowed Christ and his apostles did put the churches under some form of government or other. But, 1. Did they put all the churches under the same precise form? If they did, 2. Can we prove this to have been the same which now remains in the Church of England?"

And in his letter of 1784, he alludes again to Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church, which first convinced him that bishops and presbyters were of the same order in the ministry. I have made these quotations in the order in which they were recorded, for the purpose of showing that Mr. Wesley was by no means hurried into this act against his better informed judgment; but on the contrary, it had been for a length of time his settled conviction—a conviction wrought in his mind from close inspection, after long and mature thought and investigation; and that he was deterred from a more immediate execution of what he considered Scripturally lawful, only from prudential considerations; he did not wish to innovate upon the established order of things in Great Britain, nor yet in America, so long as the latter remained under the civil jurisdiction of the former.

Here, then, I shall rest the question respecting the identity of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church, and of their power of ordination, having, as I think, fully sustained my position,

1. From the Sacred Scriptures.
2. From the primitive fathers.

3. From the most respectable ecclesiastical writers in the English Episcopal Church.

4. From the testimony of Bishop White and those English bishops who were concerned in his consecration to the episcopal office.

5. From the recorded opinions of Mr. Wesley.

In my next, Providence permitting, I shall make an attempt to apply these principles to the organization and establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church; by which we shall be able to judge yet more intelligibly whether we are justified in these proceedings from Scriptural and primitive usages.

NUMBER VII.

Application of the foregoing principles—Mr. Wesley's character—His associates—Dr. Coke's credentials—Mr. Wesley's letter to Dr. Coke, Francis Asbury, and the brethren in North America—Dr. Coke's ordination justified from St. Paul's consecration—From the church of Alexandria—From Timothy—From testimonies of English prelates—Bishop White—From analogy—Original power of ordination in the body of elders—Delegated to others for the sake of convenience—No particular form prescribed—Mr. Wesley's right to ordain Dr. Coke and others recognized—It grew out of his relation to the Methodists—Summary of the whole argument.

HAVING thus prepared the way, I shall now proceed to inquire whether, in conformity to the principles we have established, Mr. Wesley and those engaged with him were justified in the steps they took to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church. To be able to determine this point intelligibly, it is necessary that we should know who they were by whom this work was done, and what was their character.

In respect to Mr. Wesley himself, all know that he

was a regularly ordained presbyter of the Church of England. That he was called to the work of the Christian ministry, not only by the appointment of men, according to the ritual of the Church of England, but also by the Holy Ghost, he furnished the most indubitable evidence by that astonishing success in the awakening and conversion of sinners, which had been witnessed from the commencement of his public ministry. None, indeed, but such as are blinded by prejudice, or rendered incapable of reasoning by an incurable bigotry, will question his call to, and qualifications for the work of the ministry, any more than they will his regular induction into that office according to the requirements of the English Church.

Associated with him was the Rev. Mr. Creighton, also a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man of eminent literary and spiritual attainments, who had devoted himself to the work of an itinerant minister, under the direction of Mr. Wesley.

With these was connected Thomas Coke, LL.D., another regular presbyter of the same church, whose zeal in the cause of Christ, and attachment to the Wesleyan plan of spreading the gospel, had commended him to the confidence of all who had had an opportunity of witnessing and appreciating his labors.

Here, then, were *three presbyters*, all men of piety and ardent zeal in the cause of Christ, whose sole aim, if we may judge of men's intentions by their works, was to promote the present and eternal salvation of men. Having assembled together at Bristol, and being perfectly agreed in the lawfulness and expediency of the measure, they first proceeded to set apart Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat to the office of elders or presbyters; and then Mr. Wesley, assisted by the

presbyters present, set apart Thomas Coke, LL.D., to the office of superintendent of the Methodist Societies in America, giving him at the same time the following testimonial and letter to the brethren in America :—

"To all whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, Presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting:

"Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the same church ; and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers :—

"Know all men, that I, *John Wesley*, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

JOHN WESLEY."

Mr. Wesley also wrote the following letter, which Dr. Coke was directed to print and circulate among the societies on his arrival in America :—

"*Bristol, September* 10, 1784.

"To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America.

"By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch. Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise the right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.

"But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish minister. So that for some hundreds of miles together, there is none either to baptize, or to administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore,

my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

"I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing, and administering the Lord's supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think the best constituted national church in the world,) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

"If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the bishop of London to ordain one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they were to ordain them now, they would expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply

to follow the Scriptures and primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free. JOHN WESLEY."

One of the grand objections to these proceedings is, that Mr. Wesley, being a presbyter, ordained Dr. Coke a superintendent or bishop, thereby making him superior in office to himself. This objection, being specious, I will endeavor to obviate, and thereby to justify the act.

1. It is justified, in the first place, from the example of the manner in which St. Paul was consecrated by *Simon*, *Lucius*, and *Menaen*—all of whom were certainly inferior in *office*, at least, to him on whom they laid their hands.

Indeed, there is a very striking resemblance between this act of these three prophets and teachers, who consecrated the Apostle Paul, and the act of Wesley and his associates, who set apart Dr. Coke. It is said of the former, that after they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, "they sent them away." "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." So also, when Dr. Coke received his commission by the laying on of the hands of the presbyters who were assembled in the city of Bristol, he and his companions were *sent away*, and "they sailed as far" as America, where, like those ancient ambassadors of Christ, they were employed in "preaching the word of God," and in organizing a church according to the apostolic model.

2. It is justified, in the second place, by the presbyters of the church of Alexandria, who, for

200 years, were in the practice of rejecting all foreign interference in the consecration of their bishop; and so far were they from keeping up the succession in the office of a third order superior to presbyters, that they always waited for the death of their ruling bishop, and then proceeded to elect one out of their own number, and the remaining eleven laid their hands on him and blessed him, thereby making him a patriarch, or first minister. They thus created one to be head over the rest, that is, *superior* in *office* to themselves.

3. It is justified by the manner in which Timothy was consecrated, "which was with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." For, allowing what our opponents contend for, that Timothy was an apostle or a bishop in their sense of the term, then it would follow that these presbyters conferred orders upon one who was superior to themselves—the same as Mr. Wesley, and those elders who were associated with him, conferred the office of superintendent or bishop—for I contend not about names—upon Dr. Coke.

4. It is justified by all the testimonies I have brought from the primitive fathers respecting the identity of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church, and their power of ordination.

5. It is justified by the arguments of Bishop White in favor, "from the exigencies of the times," of providing for the "positive and indispensable duties of Christianity," by securing, through the medium of *presbyterial* ordination, the blessings of episcopal government—and by the approbation of those English bishops, who saw and read Bishop White's pamphlet, without censuring either it or its author, but consecrated him a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church with the full knowledge that he held those

sentiments, in the belief of which he lived and died. One might suppose that such a justification as is contained in these five arguments, would be sufficient to silence all objections. I have, however, others to offer.

Notwithstanding the examples I have quoted in behalf of the fact, that a body of elders may, if they see fit, invest one of their own order with an office superior to themselves, it is often objected to, in a sneering manner, as totally unjustifiable on the principles of the gospel; and the objection, that in such a case "the greater is blessed of the less," is quoted with a sort of triumph, as though it were impious even to suppose it possible. But, as I have before remarked, this is a case of almost daily occurrence, both in and out of the church. In these United States, the people, with whom the right of self-government is supposed originally to reside, elect their representatives, governors, and presidents, who thereby become, in virtue of their office, superior to those from whom they derive their authority. The people hereby abridge themselves of a portion of their original, inherent rights and liberties, by vesting them in others, for the greater security and protection of those which remain. Hence those thus elected to office are styled the *delegates* of the people, because the power they possess is *delegated* to them by those by whom it was originally possessed. This is a principle universally recognized and acted upon in all public bodies; and it grows out of the very nature of the social compact. A number of persons assemble together to deliberate on some subject of general interest; and that they may conduct their deliberations in an orderly manner, they elect a *president* or *chairman*, to whom is given, for the time being, a control over their deli-

berations; and he is, therefore, during the time he holds his office, their superior, *overseer*, or *bishop*. And is he any the less so because he derived his official standing from his equals?

So in the primitive church, the power of ordination was originally in the body of elders; but, for the sake of convenience, as a matter of expediency, instead of retaining it in their own hands they might, and, it seems, in some instances did, delegate it to others; though I am by no means able to prove from Scripture that it was a universal custom, nor that it was so in any instance, that the same person was consecrated by prayer and imposition of hands three several times to the office of deacon, elder, and bishop, evangelist, or apostle. If any one will bring such an example, I will bow to it with all submission. Indeed, the laying on of hands was practised on other occasions beside the consecration of ministers. When Jesus Christ took the little children in his arms, he *put his hands upon them* and blessed them. The same ceremony was used in baptism, as well as in praying for the recovery of the sick, as we read in several places. It seems, therefore, to have been an apostolic practice to accompany the dedication of a person to any special service in the church with prayer and imposition of hands, and hence it might or might not have been practised whenever a person was elected to any peculiar work in a department of the Christian ministry. But as this is neither commanded nor can be proved by any example on record in the Holy Scriptures, nor yet, so far as I am informed, in any of the primitive fathers for the first two centuries, it is a matter of indifference whether it be done or left undone—it is not, I think, *essential* in all these instances.

As we have no specific form of church government prescribed in the Holy Scriptures, much is left to the discretion of the church itself, to be regulated as the exigencies of the times, the circumstances of the place, or the particular genius of the people may dictate to be expedient. If any particular form of government had been essential to the existence, integrity, and prosperity of the church, doubtless a systematical draft would have been left on record for the guidance of all future generations. Instead of this, we are left to historical incidents, to practices alluded to in a summary way, while the writer was intent upon another subject, to collect our views in relation to the orders and powers of the ministry, as well as to many other matters of church government. Thus much we may safely infer, that an order of ministers, constituted such by the laying on of the hands of the presbyters, who are in Scripture interchangeably called elders or bishops, is essential to a regularly organized church: but whether the ceremony of consecration was administered more than once to the same person to induct him into the full ministry, is, I believe, more than can be decided by an express warrant from Scripture, or by any example left upon record. The probability is, I allow, that they were consecrated first to the office of deacons, and secondly to the order of elders; but, as I cannot prove this from Scripture, I dare not affirm it as essential to constitute a valid ministry. As, however, it has been thus left to the discretion of those concerned, to regulate these matters in such manner and form as a prudent regard to circumstances shall dictate to be expedient and suitable, I can see no reason to condemn those who have adopted the practice of securing three orders in the ministry, pro-

vided it be so done as not to transgress a known precept of Jesus Christ, or an acknowledged practice of the apostles.

That this view of the subject is according to the doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as well as our own, may be seen from the following article of religion which has been adopted by us both :—"It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." This is very far from pleading for the *divine right* of episcopacy, as now contended for by Pro Ecclesia and others, and is a justification of the proceedings of Wesley and his associates in the instance before us.

Those, therefore, who set apart Dr. Coke, being regularly ordained presbyters themselves, as they did not transgress any law of Jesus Christ, had a right to do as they did. Not being forbidden, but justified from the analogy of things, to do this by prayer and imposition of hands, they chose this method in preference to any other.

It has been farther objected that Dr. Coke, being a presbyter, and therefore equal as to order in the ministry with Mr. Wesley, had as good a right to ordain him, as he had to ordain Dr. Coke. I allow that, so far as right depended upon order simply, he had. In other respects, however, there was a vast difference between the two. Mr. Wesley was the father of the whole work. The entire body of Methodists had been raised up through his instrumentality. To him, therefore, they all looked for advice and direction in all matters relating to their spiritual welfare. He had

a right, growing out of his relation to the whole connection, to which others, however eminent their attainments, or whatever official relation they might hold to other bodies, could not possibly make any just claim. The whole body of Methodists knowing this, and acknowledging Mr. Wesley as their spiritual father and founder, would receive from him what they could not, with any justice or propriety, from any one else. Though, therefore, Wesley and Coke were equal as to official rank in the church, there was no comparison between them as to the relation they held to the Methodist societies. While the former had been laboring in the ministry of reconciliation for upward of fifty years, and had become the father of a numerous progeny of spiritual children, the latter was comparatively young in the gospel, having been connected with Mr. Wesley only about six or seven years previously to his embarking in this important enterprise. If, therefore, a minister of the Lord Jesus acquires rights by a long and laborious service, and by being made instrumental in the hands of God of one of the most extensive revivals of religion on record in modern days, then had John Wesley acquired rights in respect to jurisdiction over the Methodist societies, which it would be folly and madness for any one else to pretend to claim. Of the truth of this all must be sensible.

This, however, of itself, would not, I allow, be sufficient to justify him in a departure from a plain precept of Christ, or of infringing upon any known usage of the primitive church. While it will fully justify him in the discharge of official acts to which none others could lawfully aspire, it cannot exempt him from condemnation if it can be made to appear that

he transgressed an acknowledged rule of Christ's kingdom. But I contend that no such rule was transgressed. On the other hand, he is borne out in these proceedings by the example of St. Paul's consecration, by that of Timothy, of the Alexandrian bishops, and by the concurrent testimony of antiquity; these all justifying presbyterial ordination.

1. If an episcopal mode of church government is allowable on scriptural and primitive principles, as I think it is, then is Mr. Wesley justified from hence for preferring and establishing that mode in the manner he did.

2. If the setting apart men to the order and office of ministers originally resided in the body of presbyters, as I think I have abundantly proved that it did, then Mr. Wesley and his associates are fully justified in those transactions, for they were all regular presbyters of the Church of England.

3. If a regular succession from the apostles is necessary to constitute a valid ministry, and allowing that this succession is to be found in the Latin branch of the church, whence the Church of England derived it—until they can make good their assumption of a third order superior to elders in a regular descent from the apostles, as essential to ordination, which I deny to be possible—then we are in the succession, and therefore are justified in the manner in which our church was organized and established.

4. If learning, deep piety, ardent zeal, the most evident sanctions from the supreme Head of the church, are necessary to authenticate the validity of a divine call to the ministry, and to authorize men otherwise competent to establish a church, then were the founders of the Methodist Episcopal Church justified in

what they did, for they had all these marks in an eminent degree.

To all this it may be objected that there was no *necessity* for these transactions, inasmuch as the people might have been furnished with the means of grace by the hands of the regular clergy, without them. As this is a very weighty objection, I must, from the length of the present number, defer its answer to a subsequent one. In the meantime, I must be permitted to remark, that though this objection is allowed to be weighty, I think I have the most weighty of all my arguments in defence of Mr. Wesley and his associates, to remove it out of the way. Here, indeed, lies the main strength of the cause, for nothing will justify a man in doing an *unnecessary* work—a work of supererogation.

NUMBER VIII.

True state of the argument—The necessity of these proceedings from the state of society in Great Britain—The regular clergy incompetent for the work performed by Wesley—He was a reformer of the people—Opposed by those who should have sustained him—*They*, therefore, created the necessity for Methodism—Wesley called of God.

The reader will bear in mind that our inquiry is respecting the conformity of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the original or primitive church of Christ: and I think I have already produced several points in which the parallel holds good, but more particularly as it regards the manner in which the ministry of each was constituted. It should also be remembered that the question is not whether the apostles and itinerating evangelists ordained others or not, but whether the

right of ordination was *restricted* to them; and I think I have already proved that it was not, but that the original right was vested in the eldership; and that therefore, whenever others exercised it, the power was delegated to them by those elders to whom it originally belonged. This having been proved by facts and arguments which cannot be easily set aside, the whole has been applied in justification of Mr. Wesley and his associates.

If, however, there was no call for these proceedings; if the world could have been saved better, or even as well without them as with them, so that there was no *necessity* from the circumstances of the times, from the moral and religious state of the church and the world, for such an organization; then must all our arguments fail of carrying conviction to the mind of the reader of either the lawfulness or expediency of these measures. To this view of the subject, therefore, I will now address myself.

Let it be observed that there are two sorts of *necessity;* the one arising out of the *nature* of things, or the *circumstances* of the case, and the other from a plain, *positive law.* The first is the necessity for which I plead. It arose plainly out of the nature of things as they then existed, or the circumstances in which the church was placed. The latter sort of necessity, if the law be of *divine origin,* admits of no reasoning as to whether it should be yielded to or not, because *such* a law is of paramount obligation; the claims of which yield to no other plea of necessity, however urgent may be the circumstances for a contrary course. So, if our opponents can bring a *positive* command of God for their *third* order, no plea of necessity can justify a deviation from it. *But this is*

the very thing we deny. And in the absence of such a law, that necessity which arises out of the nature of things has an *antecedent* claim to all human requisitions, and cannot therefore be dispensed with without incurring guilt.

On this account our plea of necessity puts at defiance all those human restraints arising out of men's policy, and forces itself upon us, *a priori*, with all the authority of an immutable obligation.

That which is necessary to enable us to fulfil legally a positive precept, has all the binding influence of a divine obligation. But baptism and the Lord's supper are imposed upon the members of the church in the form of positive precept; unordained ministers are not qualified, except in some extreme cases, to administer these ordinances; therefore it is the duty of those ministers who have it not to procure ordination, provided they can do it without transgressing a known precept, that they may rightfully administer these ordinances. In the case of Methodism this necessity existed, and this qualification was sought and found in a lawful way.

That the state of society was such in Great Britain at the time Wesley arose as to call, in most imperious language, for a reformation, no one at all acquainted with those times will, I presume, pretend to question. Both clergy and laity had sunk away into a lamentable state of lukewarmness as it respects vital godliness, and the majority of them were guilty not only of neglecting the principles and spirit of their own church, but even of open profanity, and almost a total abandonment of the means of grace.

Let those who doubt the truth of this statement consult Simpson's Plea for Religion, Wesley's Appeal

to Men of Reason and Religion, neither of which has ever been answered, much less refuted, and Buck's Theological Dictionary, under the article "Methodists," and they will have their doubts removed. There was therefore a necessity here of a reformation, to save the nation from being carried away with the floods of ungodliness, profaneness, and infidelity; and Wesley and his coadjutors appear to have been raised up to effect this reformation, and to bring about this salvation. This is now generally admitted by all parties. And though the cry of heresy, fanaticism, and false doctrine, was raised against him by the lukewarm and the profligate, Wesley held on his way, witnessing everywhere the blessed results of his evangelical labors, in the awakening and conversion of souls. Such, however, was the opposition manifested toward him, that he was driven, first from the pulpits, and then forced into the "highways and hedges," to seek after the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." This irregularity, as it was called, brought on him additional reproach, and compelled him either to violate the dictates of a good conscience, by refraining from preaching altogether, or to persist in proclaiming salvation to a lost world in the open fields, and wherever else he could find access to the people. The success attending his labors brought thousands to inquire what they should do to be saved. To answer their solemn inquiry, and to build them up in the faith of the gospel, he found it necessary to form them into societies, under a set of rules by which they should regulate their conduct. But these soon so multiplied as to make it needful for him to have helpers in the ministry, to exercise that pastoral oversight which was required to "feed them with the sincere milk of the word," and to preserve them in faith and purity.

Who were to do this? As to the regular clergy, they were, in general, fit for any thing beside. They persecuted both him and the flock intrusted to his care. In this dilemma God raised him helpers in a way he little expected. Some of the young men who had been converted to God by his instrumentality soon gave evidence of their call and qualifications for the work of the Christian ministry. Though quite reluctant at first to accept of this kind of help, so wedded was he to the orders and peculiarities of his church, yet, being convinced that divine Providence had raised them up for this very purpose, he accepted of their services, and appointed them to their field of labor. All this came upon him contrary to his expectations. Yet, on mature and prayerful consideration, he could not but receive it as coming in the order of divine Providence and grace.

Now the question is, Was it necessary, for the reformation and salvation of the people, for Wesley to adopt those measures? I think it was. Who else would have stepped forth to stem the torrent of iniquity? Who was there in the nation, at that time, so well fitted by education, by science, by fervent piety, by evangelical views, to revive primitive Christianity, and to spread scriptural holiness through the land? And what other means, so likely to accomplish this, could have been adopted? If we may judge of a cause by the effects produced, the cause of all that mighty reformation which John Wesley and his associates effected, was the power and grace of God, which wrought mightily in him and in those that believed through his word.

These remarks apply chiefly to the state of things in Great Britain. And had the church there waited

for those who claim all church authority from their being in the apostolic succession, it might have remained until this day unreformed, asleep in sin, and have gone on in its downward course of spiritual declension and ruin. They were so far from putting forth an effort to reform the church, or to save sinners from the error of their ways, that they opposed and persecuted those who aimed to effect this great work. Let it not be said that Wesley was opposed first because of his forming societies, employing lay preachers, &c., for all this was subsequent to his being denied the use of the pulpits, and his name cast out as evil. And for what, and by whom, was he thus opposed and persecuted? Why, by the very men who ought to have been the first to uphold and defend him, and for preaching those very doctrines which they had sworn to promulgate and defend. If, therefore, the reformation, the necessity of which was as clear as the light at noonday, had been left to those sleepy shepherds, it had remained uneffected to this day.

That God raised up and qualified Wesley for a reformer of the people, who will take it upon him to dispute? I say a *reformer of the people;* for he never attempted a reformation of the church, either as to her doctrines or mode of government: so far was he from attempting this, that he was bigotedly attached to her rituals, to the order of her priesthood, and to all her peculiarities; so much so, that he tells us that at one time he would have thought it almost a sin to save souls out of the church. He was therefore never guilty of the whining cant by which those pseudo reformers have always distinguished themselves, whose object seemed to be more to pull down than to build up, and to raise themselves on the destruction of

others. His simple object was to revive pure and primitive Christianity *in* the church of which he was a minister; and he labored most conscientiously and assiduously to fill that church, of which he was such "a burning and shining light," with the Spirit and glory of God; and had he been encouraged and sustained as he ought to have been, instead of establishing Methodism as a distinct connection, the Church of England might have been the glory of all lands. The opposition, therefore, to Wesley arose from those very persons who should have given him support, and on account of the bold, pointed, and spirited manner in which he proclaimed abroad those identical truths which were found in the articles and formularies of the Church of England; the denial of which by his opponents and persecutors involved a renunciation on their part of the "faith once delivered to the saints."

Now, will our antagonists say that there was no necessity for these truths to be preached? Or will they insist that they might have been as successfully preached and defended by the regular clergy, without making such an innovation upon the established order of things? To this I answer, that the innovation was their own fault. *They*, not Wesley, were the apostates from the church. *They* violated their ordination vows, departed from the spirit and letter of their own doctrines, and thus desecrated their own hallowed things by mingling them with errors of a deleterious character, and by sanctioning vices which both Scripture and their own church condemned. As I before remarked, if their want of Christian faith and zeal had not made it necessary for Wesley to forsake their churches, and to provide an asylum for himself and those converted under his ministry, the Church of

England might have had within its pale the most holy priesthood and spiritual membership of any communion on earth.

Did the Head of the church call Wesley to this work? I will answer this question by asking another. Was the work in which Wesley engaged so zealously and successfully the work of God or the work of man? If you say it was the work of God, then you allow that the Head of the church called Wesley to its performance, and that he sustained and sanctioned him in it. If you say it was the work of man, then you affirm that a man, independently of divine grace, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, could, by his own power and influence, reform more sinners from the error of their ways, and build them up in all holy living, than all the clergymen in England beside! Take, therefore, your own choice. If you choose the former, i. e., that it was the work of God, then you grant all for which I contend. If the latter, then you allow that sinners may be brought from darkness to light, and become changed in heart and life, by human power alone. You must therefore either allow that John Wesley was called, sustained, and sanctioned by the Head of the church, or turn open infidels, and confess that the power of the gospel is no longer necessary to the conversion and salvation of the world; or, rejecting both these alternatives, deny that the reformation he was instrumental in effecting was the work of God. Take your choice, and abide the consequences.

But these arguments, you will say, apply only to John Wesley, as a minister of the Lord Jesus, who is employed in preaching the gospel to a perishing world. I allow it. I consider them, therefore, only as prepa-

ratory, in this branch of the inquiry, to the grand question, whether it was necessary, in order to secure the use of the ordinances of the church of God to the Methodist societies in America, for Wesley and his coadjutors to exercise the power of ordination, and adopt the plan for the organization of these societies into a church here. But as this branch of the inquiry will occupy more space than can be well allowed to the present number, I must defer its consideration until my next. I will just say, therefore, now, by way of apprizing the reader of the basis of this part of the argument, that if it be the duty of the spiritual members of the church, and the proper subjects of baptism, to receive the ordinances of Jesus Christ; and that if they cannot be validly administered without a validly ordained ministry, then it becomes the imperious duty of those who are concerned in building up a church, to see, if possible, that it be provided with such a ministry. To say that it is the duty of Christians to partake of ordinances, and then deny to them the only way in which they can partake of them lawfully, is extremely absurd and cruel. And in the farther examination of this subject, we shall see, if I mistake not, that our opponents are reduced, by their own objections to our proceedings, to this very dilemma.

NUMBER IX.

The same state of society here as in England—Reformation followed the labors of Methodist preachers—Unordained ministers not qualified to administer the ordinances—The necessity for these measures arose also from the character of the clergy—This proved from the testimony of Bishop White, Dr. Hawks, and Mr. Jarratt—Mr. Wesley's position justified his acts—His letter to Bishop Lowth—His consistency—The separation justified.

HAVING shown, from the state of the world, and particularly the church in Great Britain, that there was a *necessity* for a reformation in morals and religion at the time Wesley arose, and that he adopted the most likely means to effect this reformation, it now remains to inquire whether the same necessity existed in America. So far as respected the moral and religious state of the people in this country, the same facts and arguments we have already used in reference to England, will apply with equal propriety and force to the state of things here. With the exception of a few insulated places in the more northern provinces, pure religion was at a very low ebb throughout the length and breadth of the country when it was first visited by the Methodist missionaries. It is true that the itinerating labors of Whitefield and some others of a kindred spirit, though of a more stationary character, had produced a salutary effect upon the minds of many in different parts of the country; but yet the generality of the people were asleep as it respects spiritual and divine things; while many were carried away with the overflowing flood of infidelity. As to the clergy of the Church of England, confined principally to the middle and southern provinces, they were far removed from the simplicity and purity of the gospel ministry.

Such was the state of things in this country when the Methodist itinerants commenced their gospel labors. As in England, their labors were blessed in the awakening and conversion of sinners, and in arousing the attention of the people, wherever they came, to the things of eternity. Those who were brought from darkness to light through their instrumentality, were gathered into societies, under the same rules by which the Methodists were governed in Great Britain. Being thus brought into Christian fellowship under the ministration of men whom they owned as their spiritual fathers, it was natural for them to wish to receive the ordinances of the Lord's supper and baptism from the same hands. Accordingly this desire was manifested at an early period of their history, and so urgently did a necessity of complying with it appear, that, as I have before remarked, contrary to the wishes of a majority, some of the preachers had proceeded to ordain each other, that they might have a lawful pretext to administer the ordinances. This took place with the southern preachers. It was strongly resisted by Mr. Asbury and the more northern preachers, and, after an anxious and laborious effort to induce the malcontents to desist, they succeeded in persuading them to suspend farther proceedings until they could consult Mr. Wesley. He was consulted, and the result was as I have before stated.

Now, the question is, was the state of things such as to justify the measures which were adopted? It will be granted on all hands, with the exception of one inconsiderable denomination, that it is the duty of all Christians to partake of the supper of the Lord, and to see that the proper subjects of baptism should have that ordinance administered unto them. It is

equally plain that unordained ministers are not qualified to administer these ordinances, any more than they are, without the most imperious necessity, to confer ecclesiastical orders upon others, and thus preserve the true succession of the ministry in the church. But the Methodist ministers had, up to this period of their existence, been considered only as lay preachers, and as such were unauthorized either to ordain others, or to administer the Christian ordinances. Of this disqualification they were all sensible; for even the few who partially seceded from the original plan of Mr. Wesley, were so fully impressed with this truth, that they would not proceed to administer baptism and the Lord's supper until they had first procured an ordination of themselves, although it must be admitted it was done in an irregular and a disorderly way.

Here, then, were about *fifteen thousand* adult members of society, and *eighty-three* preachers, all destitute of the ordinances themselves, nor could they, without great inconvenience, procure baptism for their children. It may, however, be said that they might have gone to other denominations for these ordinances. To this there were insuperable objections.

1. In those places where the Methodists were most numerous, there were but few clergymen to be found, and some even of these were so destitute of piety themselves, that they opposed and persecuted both preachers and people who belonged to the Methodists.

2. In consequence of the unevangelical character of most of the clergy of the Church of England, so called, those people who had been raised up by the instrumentality of the Methodist preachers, were unwilling either to attend their ministry or to receive the ordi-

nances from their hands. To the want of evangelical qualifications in these clergymen, Dr. Hawks and Bishop White both testify; the former by saying that some of them had taken military commissions in the army, and that one, a strong tory, fearing the wrath of the people, took pistols into the pulpit to defend himself against any assault: the latter remarks, that the Church of England "was becoming more and more unpopular, with some because it was not considered as promoting piety, and with these and others, because they thought the provision for it a useless burden on the community." Bishop White then proceeds to say:—

"In Maryland and Virginia, there were many of the clergy whose connections with their flocks were rendered, by their personal characters, dependent wholly on the continuance of the establishment, and of course, fell with it." What a sad picture is this of the character of the clergy! Having lost the confidence of the people by the worthlessness of their character, no sooner was the legal provision for their support withdrawn—which was the case soon after the commencement of the revolutionary contest—than they fell into disgrace, and being neglected by the people, were obliged to seek support from other sources. This is farther confirmed by the following remarks of the same author:—

"After the fall of the establishment, a considerable proportion of the clergy continued to enjoy the glebes—the law considering them freeholders during life—without performing a single act of sacred duty, except, perhaps, that of marriage. They knew that their public ministrations would not have been attended." [See Bishop White's Mem., p. 76.]

Is it any wonder that the people forsook such "idle shepherds," who devoured the flock instead of feeding it? And will any man say that it was the duty of the Methodist preachers and people to go to these clergy, who may be fitly compared to the "dumb dogs" of Isaiah, who were more fond of "lying down and loving to slumber," than they were of taking an oversight of the flock of Christ? And were these the men to complain of the Methodists for separating from them? Or will their successors, who, through the instrumentality of this very Methodism have been aroused to wakeful thought, and active, spiritual life, condemn the Methodists of that day for making provision for themselves, instead of waiting for those indolent priests, who could take an advantage of a technical distinction of law to retain their livings, "without performing a single act of sacred duty, except, perhaps, marriage;" and in all probability they would not have done even that, were it not for the hope of the fee with which it was connected! Who, with these facts before them, will not say that it was a solemn duty for the Methodists to withdraw all connection with a church thus fallen?—to refuse fellowship with a priesthood thus corrupt?

To this melancholy picture of the state of the clergy in general, agrees that of Dr. Hawks, in respect to them in Virginia. Speaking of the termination of the revolutionary struggle, he says:—

"When the contest was over, she came out of the war with a large number of her churches destroyed or injured irreparably, with twenty-three of her ninety-five parishes extinct or forsaken, and of the remaining seventy-two, thirty-four were destitute of ministerial services; while of her ninety-eight clergymen,

twenty-eight only remained, who had lived through the storm."

Now, while we lament such a devastation of churches which the war inflicted, we may ask, Why this diminution of clergymen in the Episcopal Church? The historian from whom I quote, will himself furnish us with an answer. While many fled from their country during the war on account of their adherence to the cause of Britain, others had turned soldiers, and most of the remainder had become so obnoxious to the people on account of their indifference to their spiritual interests, that they would neither hear nor support them. This accords with the testimony of Bishop White, above quoted. Had these clergymen, like the Methodist preachers, manifested a suitable interest for the salvation of the souls of the people, during the sanguinary conflict, they would have been equally honored by the people. While the latter, amid storms of persecution, even from many of these very clergymen themselves, as well as from other sources, persevered in the faithful discharge of their duty, and came forth from the fiery ordeal not only unscathed, but improved in morals and religion, having increased from a mere handful to about fifteen thousand strong—while, I say, this was the case with the Methodists, these boasted successors of the apostles, claiming the exclusive right of ordination and of administering the sacraments, fled from their flocks in the "stormy day," exchanged the gown and cassock for the sword and pistol, and when the storm was over, fed themselves upon the glebes without even performing a "single act of sacred duty, except marriage," nor would they, it seems, have done this, only from the hope of the fee! And yet the Methodists

are censured for not uniting with these lukewarm and unfaithful clergymen! condemned for not giving themselves and their flocks into the hands of such shepherds! Truly, we want no better plea than this for the *necessity*—yea, the absolute and indispensable *duty* of providing for ourselves under such circumstances. Nor are we afraid or ashamed to look our opponents in the face, and ask them why, in the very nature of things, did they not come to the Methodists and unite with them in reforming the church from such gross neglect, and such shameful departure from the pure principles of the gospel, as were exhibited in the conduct of these reputed successors of the apostles!*

* There were some honorable exceptions to this general censure. The Rev. Mr. Jarratt, in particular, received the Methodist preachers with great cordiality, attended their quarterly meetings, and administered the sacraments of the Lord's supper and baptism to their people and children, and aided them with his counsel whenever requested. Had this spirit and conduct continued unabated, and had the clergy of that day generally manifested a kindred spirit, the Church of England would never have been reduced to the sad state above described, nor had the Methodists been under the same necessity of a separate organization. A union of effort, under such circumstances, might have been productive of the happiest results. But under the circumstances which actually existed, a union was impossible, unless you can make it appear that Christ and Belial, light and darkness, may "firm concord hold."

It is true that after the Methodists became organized as a separate church, Mr. Jarratt's feelings, if we may believe what is said in the letters attributed to him, and which were published after his death, underwent a surprising revolution, and he is made to utter bitter things against his old friends, not much to his credit, even allowing the facts on which he grounds his accusation to be true, as they breathe a spirit of hostility, and are uttered in a coarseness of language hardly compatible with the spirit of Christianity. This record is made with the more reluctance from the recollection of his usefulness in the ministry

Now, I say, was it not *necessary* under these circumstances for the Methodists to make provision for themselves, to supply their people with the word and ordinances of Jesus Christ?

in the earlier part of his labors, and particularly while his efforts were seconded by the Methodist preachers. But allowing that the favor Mr. Jarratt showed them, was on account of their professed attachment to the Church of England, as some contend, which was certainly sincere at the time, it only proves that much of selfishness mingled in his feelings, and detracts, therefore, somewhat from the benevolence of his views. On this account I choose to attribute the altered state of his mind to other causes than a mere pique at the Methodists for forming a separate organization. The fact is, an alienation of feeling was manifested, if we may credit the letters alluded to, before this formal separation took place, and no doubt arose, in some measure at least, from seeing so many of the people uniting themselves under the Methodist standard, connected probably with acts of imprudence on the part of some of the Methodist preachers in their conduct toward him. Such are the lamentable weaknesses of human nature!

But if Mr. Jarratt's testimony is to be quoted in one case, it certainly should be relied on in the other; and he fully corroborates all that has been said respecting the clergy of the establishment. Let the reader consult pp. 99, 133, 135, 196, of his life. On the last mentioned page he says,—"Indeed most of the clergy, as far as I can learn, have preached, for a long time, what is little better than deism, notwithstanding our old articles were so pointed and clear on the peculiar doctrines of the Christian religion." And he assigns as a reason for not attending the conventions of his church any more, his want of fellowship for their doings. Let it be recollected that this letter of Mr. Jarratt is dated in the year 1796, *twelve* years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Indeed, throughout his letters, he speaks of the clergy of his own church as having been among his most bitter revilers and persecutors; and here, in the year 1796, he says they had, for a *long time*, preached what is "little better than *deism*." And yet these are the men, for separating from whom we are censured!

I should not have adverted to these things had not Dr. Hawks referred to Mr. Jarratt, by way of reproach upon the Methodists.

3. As to other denominations, they manifested an irreconcilable opposition both to the doctrines and usages of the Methodists. The doctrines of general redemption, of regeneration, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, which were preached by the Methodists, were stigmatized as the effusions of a distempered brain, and their propagators as "false prophets," "wolves in sheep's clothing," and the pulpits rung with fearful warnings lest the "elect" should be deluded and destroyed by their means. And as to the doctrine of absolute unconditional predestination, which was the creed of the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, it was repudiated by the Methodists, as both untrue in itself, and pernicious in its consequences. With these, therefore, who held and propagated this unscriptural doctrine, they could not unite; and even if they had offered their services they would doubtlessly have been rejected, unless they had at the same time abjured their peculiar doctrines.

This then was the state of things at that time. Opposed and persecuted by some, ridiculed and despised by others, they were driven, by the force of these and other circumstances, to seek for redress where alone it could be found. Those clergymen, who, above all others, should have befriended them, were alike hostile to their own and the interests of their fellow creatures. Blind themselves, they were unqualified to lead others into the strait and narrow way.

This is one ground for the necessity of the measures which were pursued. Others, however, are not wanting to justify them.

Mr. Wesley was a presbyter of the Church of England. As such he had no right, without the most urgent necessity, to exercise the power of ordination.

Although he was convinced, from a critical search into the records of antiquity, that the right of ordination belonged originally to the body of presbyters, yet, as a member of the English Church, he had agreed that this power should be, for reasons which were satisfactory to him at the time, vested in the bishops alone. Hence, so long as that church exercised jurisdiction in America, he refused to interfere, not because the thing was unlawful in itself, but because he did not feel at liberty to disturb the established order of things in his own church. But on the acknowledgment of the independence of these United States, by which not only the civil and political power of Great Britain was annihilated in this country, but also all ecclesiastical jurisdiction withdrawn, the circumstances of the case were materially altered, and he therefore felt himself, as he says, at full liberty, being no longer bound by his vows to the restrictive regulations of the English establishment, to follow the example of the primitive church. The very arguments used by Bishop White to justify the organization of an Episcopal Church "without waiting for the succession," and those I have quoted from other Episcopal writers, were used by Mr. Wesley, to justify his proceedings in the premises; and had they been denied, as we shall soon see Mr. Wesley was, help from other quarters, there can be no doubt that they would have proceeded to organize an Episcopal Church on the same principles, and have set up the plea of *necessity*, though it would not have been half so strong in their case as in ours, for a justification of their measures.

4. To all this it may be objected, that there was no necessity for the measure, because ordination might have been procured through a more regular channel.

To this I answer, that it could not; at least it could not without compromising the great principles of the gospel on which Methodism was founded, and to which it had been indebted for its success. Mr. Wesley tells us in his letter which was published in the last number, that he desired the "bishop of London to ordain one, but could not prevail." And there is a letter of Mr. Wesley's to the bishop of London touching this subject, so full of tender feeling, deep piety, and anxious solicitude for the welfare of souls, and is moreover so confirmatory of the above assertion of his having been denied so small a request, that I doubt not that the reader will be both edified and pleased with its perusal. It is as follows:—

TO BISHOP LOWTH.

"*August* 10, 1780.

"My Lord:—Some time since I received your lordship's favor, for which I return your lordship my sincere thanks. Those persons did not apply to the society, because they had nothing to ask of them. They wanted no salary for their minister; they were themselves able and willing to maintain him. They therefore applied, by me, to your lordship, as members of the Church of England, and desirous so to continue, begging the favor of your lordship, after your lordship had examined him, to ordain a pious man who might officiate as their minister.

"But your lordship observes, 'There are three ministers in that country already.' True, my lord: but what are three, to watch over all the souls in that extensive country? Will your lordship permit me to speak freely? I dare not do otherwise. I am on the verge of the grave, and know not the hour when I

shall drop into it. Suppose there were threescore of those missionaries in the country, could I in conscience recommend these souls to their care? Do they take any care of their own souls? If they do, (I speak it with concern!) I fear they are almost the only missionaries in America that do. My lord, I do not speak rashly: I have been in America; and so have several with whom I have lately conversed. And both I and they know what manner of men the far greater part of these are. They are men who have neither the power of religion, nor the form; men that lay no claim to piety, nor even decency.

"Give me leave, my lord, to speak more freely still: perhaps it is the last time I shall trouble your lordship. I know your lordship's abilities and extensive learning: I believe, what is far more, that your lordship fears God. I have heard that your lordship is unfashionably diligent in examining the candidates for holy orders; yea, that your lordship is generally at the pains of examining them yourself. *Examining them!* In what respect? Why, whether they understand a little Latin and Greek, and can answer a few trite questions in the science of divinity! Alas! how little does this avail? Does your lordship examine, whether they serve Christ or Belial? whether they love God or the world? whether they ever had any serious thoughts about heaven or hell? whether they have any real desire to save their own souls, or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with holy orders? and what will become of the souls committed to their care?

"My lord, I do by no means despise learning: I know the value of it too well. But what is this, particularly in a Christian minister, compared to piety?

What is it in a man that has no religion ? 'As a jewel in a swine's snout.'

"Some time since, I recommended to your lordship a plain man, whom I had known above twenty years, as a person of deep, genuine piety, and of unblamable conversation. But he neither understood Greek nor Latin; and he affirmed, in so many words, that he believed it was his duty to preach, whether he was ordained or no. I believe so too. What became of him since, I know not; but I suppose he received Presbyterian ordination; and I cannot blame him, if he did. He might think any ordination better than none.

"I do not know that Mr. Hoskins had any favor to ask of the society. He asked the favor of your lordship to ordain him, that he might minister to a little flock in America. But your lordship did not see good to ordain him: but your lordship did see good to ordain, and send into America, other persons, who knew something of Greek and Latin; but who knew no more of saving souls, than of catching whales.

"In this respect also, I mourn for poor America: for the sheep scattered up and down therein. Part of them have no shepherds at all, particularly in the northern colonies,* and the case of the rest is little

* In this expression Mr. Wesley undoubtedly alluded to the ministers of the Church of England, as being none in some places "in America, particularly in the northern colonies;" because, as to the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, they were more numerous in the northern than the southern colonies. New-England especially, was much better supplied with the external ordinances of religion, each parish generally having its stated pastor, than any other part of our country; though it must be admitted, at the same time, that pure religion was at a very low ebb even here, and that the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, such as justifying faith in Jesus Christ,

better, for their own shepherds pity them not. They cannot, for they have no pity on themselves. They take no thought or care about their own souls.

"Wishing your lordship every blessing from the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, I remain, my lord, your lordship's dutiful son and servant."

From these facts it seems quite evident that even in this extremity Mr. Wesley would not have exercised the power of ordination himself, could he have prevailed on the bishop of London to do it, and at the same time allowed them their peculiar privileges as Methodist ministers. Not that he doubted his right to ordain ministers for his own connection, for he had already said that he considered himself as truly a *bishop*, in the Scriptural acceptation of that title, as any man in England; but his hesitancy arose purely from prudential considerations, as a presbyter of the Church of England; nor did his scruples end until he saw America, "by a very uncommon train of providences," as he expresses himself, "totally disentangled both from the state and the English hierarchy," when all his doubts respecting the expediency of the measure were removed; and as he interfered with no man's right, none being either claimed or exercised in America, especially over the Methodist societies, he

the witness and fruits of the Spirit, were seldom preached by the "standing order," and seldomer made a subject of experience by the members of their churches. It is matter of gratitude to God, however, and of gratulation among the friends of experimental and practical godliness, that a brighter day has dawned upon New-England, as well as upon other portions of our beloved country, and that revivals of religion, such revivals as will, when brought to the test, bear the scrutiny of a Scriptural examination, are now more prevalent among all orders.

"judged it best" to give them such an organization as should enable them to "stand fast in that liberty wherewith God had so strangely made them free."

5. This view of the subject exempts Mr. Wesley from that inconsistency with which his adversaries, and among others, his brother Charles, have accused him in these transactions. It is said that in organizing the Methodist Episcopal Church, he acted inconsistently with his numerous avowals of his attachment to the English Church, and his oft-repeated declarations that his societies were members of that church, as well as his exhortations to them not to separate from it. To this I answer, that there was no inconsistency between these professions and his actions in the premises. In regard to the American Methodists, the circumstances under which they existed were totally altered. They were no longer members of that church. It neither exercised nor claimed any jurisdiction over them, nor had it any right, either from the civil power, or from ecclesiastical relation, to claim any jurisdiction or control of any character whatever. But in England the circumstances were different. There the church existed as it ever had done, and the Methodists in that country were considered members of the establishment. On account of these different circumstances of the two societies, Mr. Wesley acted in perfect consistency with his professions throughout, in still exhorting his people in England to cleave to the church, while he gave them a separate and independent organization where no such church existed. To have done otherwise, would have been the height of inconsistency. It would have been, in my humble opinion, a dereliction of duty; for I have no doubt that he was as evidently

called, by the providence of God, to do this thing for his American brethren, as he was to preach the gospel to sinners; and this opinion is not derived from a superstitious reverence for the man, but from an inspection of the facts in the case, and from the salutary consequences which have followed the whole transaction. Let the impartial reader compare the state of the two churches in question, and decide accordingly.

To say that an alteration of circumstances does not furnish a reason for an alteration of conduct, is no less absurd than it would be to impeach the character of God because he changes his conduct toward an individual when that individual changes his character from a wicked to a righteous man, and *vice versa.* From these altered circumstances in the two countries, the relation of the Methodists in each was so changed toward "both the state and hierarchy," as fully to justify Mr. Wesley still to advise the Methodists in England to continue united with the church, and at the same time to provide the Methodists in America with the ministry and ordinances of Jesus Christ by a separate organization; and in doing these two things, only opposite to each other in appearance—that is, so far only as the circumstances were variant—he manifested both his wisdom and consistency.

6. But if the Methodist and Protestant Episcopalians in this country are not united, whose fault is it? It appears by a letter from Dr. Coke to Bishop White, that a union was proposed by the former and rejected by the latter. I do not mention this fact with a view to justify the proposition—though I may take an opportunity hereafter to set that subject in rather a different point of light from what it has been represented by writers on the opposite side of the question

—but to show that in all likelihood, if a plan for a union between the two bodies had been proposed, it would have been rejected. If therefore, allowing this supposition to be correct, there be any evil arising from the separate organization, the fault, and of course the responsibility, rests on the shoulders of those who refused a union when offered. That Mr. Wesley earnestly desired and sought it, by his application to the bishop of London, is certain. That it was afterward proffered by Dr. Coke and rejected, is equally certain. Let then the blame rest where it ought.

The fact is, the Methodists were driven, from the force of circumstances—or rather, led, as I cannot but believe, by the beneficent providence of God to do as they did. And hence we adore that providence for the many blessings which have accompanied the humble labors of this church, and ardently pray that God may continue to smile upon our endeavors to promote his cause in the salvation of the world.

I design in my next to consider some of the objections which have been preferred against an *episcopal* form of church government, and to show that this is by no means inconsistent with the views I have attempted to sustain respecting presbyterial ordination.

NUMBER X.

The Protestant Episcopal clergy not qualified for reformers; nor does the mere act of consecration qualify a man for such a work—Distinction between the power of jurisdiction and power of order—Divers offices in the church—Lord King's error—Episcopacy Scriptural—Successors of the apostles—In what particulars—In government—Apostle, what—Timothy and Titus assistants and successors of the apostles—Primitive episcopacy itinerating—Episcopal government compatible with presbyterial ordination.

We have seen what was the general character of the Episcopal clergy at the conclusion of the revolution. Now, suppose the country had been left to them, when would a reformation have been effected? The testimony of Mr. Jarratt is conclusive upon this point. So far were they from favoring the pure gospel, that for preaching this he was opposed and persecuted to such a degree that he absented himself from their conventions, and would not fellowship their proceedings. And are we to suppose that they were any more favorable to the Methodist preachers? Were these supposed successors of the apostles, who, by virtue of their lineal descent from them, claimed the exclusive right of administering the ordinances, qualified to instruct mankind in the important doctrines of salvation, and to reform sinners from the error of their ways? And yet in this state of things, Dr. Hawks thinks that the proceedings of Mr. Wesley and his associates were wholly unnecessary! Why? Why! Because Dr. Seabury was in England at the time soliciting consecration from the Scotch bishops. But suppose they had suspended proceedings on that account, are we certain that Bishop Seabury would have ordained the Methodist preachers without requiring

a renunciation of their Methodism?* Subsequent events prove that he would not. And even if he had, would it have been any more scriptural or valid than the one we have already received? Which is the most essential to a valid ministry, a call of God, moral and spiritual qualifications, or the mere ceremony

* It seems that about the same time Dr. Coke communicated with Bishop White on the subject of a union of the two churches, he addressed a letter to Bishop Seabury on the same subject. To this letter I am not aware that Bishop Seabury ever deigned to return an answer. It is not therefore at all probable that he would have lent his official sanction to the establishment of Methodism by ordaining its ministers.

Here I cannot but notice an objection which has been brought against Dr. Coke by writers in the Protestant Episcopal Church, because he expressed his regrets to Bishop Seabury for advising the Methodists to separate from the church. This objection is preferred against Dr. Coke for the purpose of proving that he doubted the validity of his own credentials as a superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and regretted its establishment. It seems somewhat surprising that these writers cannot distinguish between Methodism in England and Methodism in America. On Dr. Coke's return to England, after having assisted in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he hastily and unadvisedly recommended a separation of the Methodists in England from the establishment. This very much displeased Mr. Wesley and the greater portion of the English Methodists. They therefore reproved him for this act of imprudence. He acknowledged his fault and they forgave him. This was the error which he tells Bishop Seabury he had committed, and which he acknowledged before three thousand people in Dublin, and in some other places.

But does he hereby acknowledge that either his own ordination or that of those who had received it at his hands, was invalid? By no means. Neither did he mean to say that the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church was an error in itself, but regretted that a union had not been effected. See this subject more fully cleared up, and the conduct of Dr. Coke vindicated, in Number xii.

The writer who has called forth this note has intimated, as

of ordination? Does the ceremony of ordination make a man a minister of Jesus Christ, who is destitute of those other prerequisites? Is consecration in any particular branch of the church of Christ any thing more than a recognition that the individual consecrated has been "called by the Holy Ghost to take upon

a reproach upon Mr. Wesley, that he would himself have been a bishop, could he have attained that high office. Without insisting that there is no fact in the history of Wesley on which this imputation can be justly founded, and, therefore, is a mere groundless conjecture, I would ask, allowing it to be true, is it any impeachment of that great and good man's character? Must every presbyter who may "desire the office of a bishop," be classed among unholy aspirants for office? What then becomes of Bishops Seabury and White, and, indeed, all others who may have manifested a similar desire? Did they not *desire*, and most diligently *seek*, for the office in the Protestant Episcopal Church? I allow, indeed, that a novice may be actuated by a criminal ambition after this high office, and may thence adopt improper means to obtain it. He may cringe, and bow, and put on popular airs to attain the object of his ambitious desires, and thus make himself obnoxious to the censures of the wise and good; but it no more follows from this that a holy and pious man, who is otherwise competent to the office, may not desire it from the purest motives, than it does that a faithful preacher of the gospel may not, from a simple wish to enlarge the sphere of his usefulness, desire the office of an elder.

It is, however, denied, that John Wesley ever desired or sought for any higher office in the Church of England than that of a presbyter. As to the Methodists, he could have aspired to no greater authority over them than that which he possessed. He was the head of the connection, and as such gave law and direction to the entire body. What more could he desire?

As to the silly story about his applying to *Erasmus*, the Greek bishop, to ordain him a bishop, it may be ranked among the fables of *Tobit* and his angel *Raphael*, concerning whom it is written that the latter taught Tobit the art of driving the evil spirit from his marriage bed by the smoke from the heart and liver of a fish! John Wesley never made such application to Erasmus. Mr. Moore has fully refuted this silly report.

him that office?" And suppose the candidate himself and his ordainers were under a mistake in respect to his having been so called, does the mere ceremony of ordination make him a minister of Jesus Christ?

On the whole, I cannot but think that the facts and circumstances of the times fully justified Mr. Wesley and his associates in their proceedings, and that what they did was absolutely called for, and therefore, if they had refrained, from motives of deference to the opinions of those who opposed them, they would have incurred a fearful responsibility, as persons unmindful of providential indications.

It may, however, be said by some, that if the position I have laid down be sustained, then an episcopal form of church government is overthrown. This, however, by no means follows.

To settle this question, we must distinguish between the power of *ordination* and the power of *jurisdiction*, as well as between the former and the several official relations which a minister may hold to the church. The power of ordination, as I have abundantly proved, was vested in the eldership, while the power of jurisdiction was not necessarily restricted to them, but might be committed to others also who were superior to them in office, and who exercised a general superintendence over the whole church. Thus the twelve apostles undoubtedly exercised a general jurisdiction over the whole church, appointed inferior officers, and distributed among them their several tasks. In the primitive church there were "diversities of gifts," "differences of administrations," and "diversities of operations"—all "by the same Spirit." "To one was given the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge." And thus "God hath set some

in the church, first apostles"—as the supreme rulers; "secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues," 1 Cor. xii, 4–28. What the specific duties of each officer in the church were, it may be difficult to determine; nor were they, I apprehend, specifically defined, but every one was left to exercise them, in subordination one to another, and under the jurisdiction of the apostles, as circumstances might dictate to be necessary and expedient. But to infer that, because these several officers are enumerated in the Holy Scriptures, there were, therefore, so many distinct *orders*, in the ecclesiastical sense of that term, created such by prayer and imposition of hands, appears to me extremely absurd, as it would give us not three orders only, but many, all equally essential for the organization of the church. Without, therefore, resorting to this erroneous view of the subject, we may admit that a general oversight of the church was exercised by the apostles, and under their jurisdiction, in a more restricted sphere, by the evangelists, presbyters, deacons, and deaconesses, all of whom being responsible for the faithful discharge of their several duties, first to each other, and finally to God the judge of all. This was undoubtedly an *episcopal* form of government, and not *presbyterial*, according to the common acceptation of that word—that is, it involved a *general oversight* by a set of superior officers, who were by no means restricted in their jurisdiction to a single congregation, as are those who contend for a parity of ministerial order and power of jurisdiction.

And here I may notice what I think to be an error in Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church,

While he very justly contends that each congregation managed its own affairs, under the direction of a single pastor, denominated interchangeably bishop or presbyter, he seems to overlook the higher and more extended jurisdiction of the apostles and itinerating evangelists, whose actual oversight of the whole church constituted a general superintendency above that of a congregational or presbyterial mode of administration. Hence this most estimable author, to whose labors we are much indebted for a correct view of many particulars relating to the early history and organization of the church, leaned much farther toward the congregational mode of church government, than the Scriptural representation of this subject would seem to warrant. While we may admit, what he contends for, that each congregation managed its own internal affairs, under the supervision of their resident bishop, without any interference from a neighboring bishop and congregation possessing only the same rights and privileges; we may, in perfect consistency with this admission, allow that over and above these bishops and congregations, the apostles, and, in their absence, the itinerating evangelists, exercised a general oversight of the whole church, thus establishing a precedent for a proper episcopal government, more in accordance with the modern episcopal churches than it is with either congregational or presbyterial parity. Hence it will be perceived that we stand at an equal distance from the ministerial parity of those who allow of but one order and of a congregational jurisdiction, and from those who affirm the existence of a third order, by *divine appointment*, as being necessarily associated with an episcopal jurisdiction. The power of *jurisdiction* is one thing, and the power of

order another. For the very persons who conferred orders by the imposition of hands, were often much more restricted in their sphere of government and the extent of their jurisdiction, than even some of those upon whom they laid their hands, in obedience to the dictates of the Holy Ghost. This has, I think, been made evident by scriptural references heretofore produced.*

But while this extended jurisdiction is allowed to the apostles, it is contended by those who deny all forms of episcopal, as distinguished from presbyterial or congregational government, that they had not, nor should have, any successors in office. Now, I think they had successors, and that those successors have been, and may be continued in the church, so far as its general superintendency and government is concerned. In some respects, to be sure, they had no successors.

* We may see this same regulation exemplified in modern episcopal churches. While they admit a general superintendency in the episcopacy, each parish, station, or circuit manages its own internal affairs, in the reception, trial, and expulsion of church members, in providing for the temporal wants of the church, building houses of worship, &c., all under a set of general rules which apply equally to each section of the church, and all brought under the inspection of a general oversight. Nor is there any incongruity here. On the contrary, so long as each member and officer, whether he be called class leader, steward, trustee, church warden, or vestryman, local or travelling preacher, deacon, or elder, curate, presbyter, or rector, conducts according to his prescribed duty in a suitable subordination, we may behold the harmonious movement of a well-balanced government, bound together in Christian union, and laboring together for the good of the whole church, and for the conversion of the world. Over this family, thus organized, Jesus Christ reigns as supreme Head, while its several members move, each in his sphere, in obedience to his will. This is especially the case when they are actuated by his Spirit.

1. In respect to plenary inspiration, and the working of miracles. The apostles were sent, not only to preach the gospel—a work common to all ministers of Jesus Christ—but more especially under the dictation of the Holy Spirit to deliver precepts, to explain and declare unto the people doctrines and promises, in an authoritative style, so that whatever was thus delivered was binding on all as the commands of God. And what was thus delivered in the nature of a divine command, or ordinance, is perpetually binding upon the church, as much so upon us as upon the primitive Christians. In this respect they have no successors, and for the very good reason, that they are not needed; for what could they deliver of a more binding and authoritative character than that which we already have; hence, were such sent they could but repeat what those inspired apostles have left upon record. A succession of inspired men, therefore, is wholly unnecessary. The same may be said of miracles, properly so called; the necessity for them having ceased, their repetition is uncalled for, and would be entirely useless.

2. The same may be said of their being eye witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as to his life, sufferings, and death. In order to establish the Christian religion firmly upon the Rock of eternal truth, it was necessary not only to identify the character of Jesus of Nazareth with the predictions found in the Jewish prophets respecting the birth, miracles, sufferings, and death of the promised Messiah, but more especially to furnish incontestable evidences of his resurrection from the dead; for by this grand event he was "declared to be the Son of God, with power"—with a power of demonstration so direct and palpable, as to bear down all resistance from opposing

forces. Now, to attest this fact, so vitally connected with the truth of the Christian system, the apostles were "eye witnesses;" and hence, when they were assembled to fill up the vacancy occasioned by the apostacy and death of Judas Iscariot, it was considered a prime qualification that the one to be adopted into the college, as they affirmed, should "be a witness with us of his resurrection," Acts i, 15--22. With these exceptions, namely, delivering inspired doctrines and precepts, working miracles, and being *eye* witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I know not that there was any thing peculiar to the office of the apostles, but what might be transmitted to their successors in the ministry. I have said *eye* witnesses—for all succeeding ministers and Christians who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, are denominated the witnesses of this fact, because the gift of the Holy Spirit, particularly upon the day of pentecost, was a most demonstrative proof, not only that Jesus had risen from the tomb, but that he actually lived at the right hand of the Father.

To say that because succeeding ministers in the church were not endued with these extraordinary gifts, and could not, in the nature of things, testify, from ocular demonstration, to the resurrection of Christ, that therefore the apostles could have no successors in office, appears to me to be assuming too much. On the same principle it might be affirmed that William the Conqueror had no successors on the throne of England, as king of Great Britain, because none of them was crowned under the same circumstances; and that General Washington could have no successors as president of these United States, merely because no one after him was inducted into office as the

deliverer of his country from foreign oppression. These both have had successors in office, possessing all the prerogatives belonging to their high stations, notwithstanding neither could be hailed as the conqueror of his country's enemies, because this qualification is not essential to their office as king or president. So, although the successors of the apostles were not, and could not be, *eye* witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor are empowered to work miracles and deliver inspired precepts—the necessity of these having ceased with the circumstances which called for their exercise—yet, so far as the government of the church was concerned, and a supreme jurisdiction was needful for its unity and prosperity, they unquestionably had successors; it was, however, a succession of *jurisdictional* powers, and not of the exclusive powers of *ordination;* nor was it, as I apprehend, of such a nature that there can be no Christian church and valid ordinances without it; for I am not prepared thus to anathematize all who dissent from us in this particular.

If it be inquired who the immediate successors of the apostles were, I answer, that, among others, Timothy and Titus, and probably Epaphroditus, must be numbered. These, in the lifetime of the apostles, according to the uniform testimony of ecclesiastical writers and commentators, were their assistants, doing that in the absence of the apostles, which they would have done themselves had they been present. This point is so plain that I need not spend time to prove it. And that they were considered inferior to the apostles, during the lives of the latter, and therefore acted under their direction and control, is most manifest from the epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and

Titus, as well as from the nature of their office as apostolic assistants.

With the Protestant Episcopalians, therefore, we have no controversy on this subject. They may, if they please, call these men apostles, or more properly evangelists, for a name alters not the nature of the thing. There is nothing in the simple name αποστολος, *apostle*, which signifies, simply, one *sent*, any more than there is in the name of *missionary*, from the Latin *mitto*, *to send*, to designate the exalted dignity of their character. This dignity arose, not simply from their name, but from the important and deeply interesting character of the message with which they were sent, and the manner in which they discharged the high trusts committed to them by the Head of the church. But when the "high church" Episcopalians plead that, because this extended power of jurisdiction was committed to the apostles and their successors, the power of ordination was also confined exclusively to them, by virtue of their office, and from them transmitted down through a third order in the church, I beg leave to record my dissent, and appeal to the numerous and strong testimonies adduced in the preceding numbers. It is equally clear, I think, from the same testimony, that those denominated bishops and presbyters, in the apostolic days, and with whom the power of ordination was originally vested, were not the successors of the apostles; because, beside other reasons which might be urged, it is manifest that their pastoral jurisdiction was limited to a single congregation, the boundaries of their charge being denominated in the apostolical fathers, παροικος, from παρα, *by* or *over*, and οικος, a *house*, whence our word *parish*, because their several charges were contiguous to each other,

or in the immediate neighborhood; whereas the district of a bishop, in after times, was called Διοικησις, which comes from a root designating a conductor of public affairs, and even a *minister of state;* so called, probably, because the bishop, after the apostolic lights had ceased to burn, imitated those state ministers in the extent of his jurisdiction, and his lordly superiority over his brethren; and hence the district of country over which he presided was called a *diocese*, and the incumbent a *diocesan*, in contradistinction from simple *parishes*, and *presbyters*. This restricted nature of their charge, I say, proves that these overseers or bishops were not the successors of the apostles. And hence it follows, that if Timothy was, as our opponents contend, the bishop of Ephesus, and Titus the bishop of Crete, they could not have been the successors of the apostles after they were dead, nor their itinerating assistants while they lived; but Timothy and Titus were such; and therefore they were not the bishops exclusively of those places.

The minor proposition alone needs proof:—

1. That they were the assistants of the apostles while the former lived, is evident from the language with which the apostle Paul addressed them. Thus he addresses "Timothy, his own son in the faith." "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach none other doctrine." "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the church of God," 1 Tim. i, 2, 3, and ii, 14, 15. From these words it is manifest that St. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus during the absence of the former, for the purpose of supplying his lack

of service, requesting him there to remain until the apostle himself should return and attend in person to the affairs of the church in that place. Can any thing be more evident from this than that Timothy acted as the assistant of the apostle, doing that in his absence which St. Paul would have done himself had he been present? And this also is a proof that Timothy was not the stationed bishop of Ephesus, restricting his labors to that city only; for in that case there would have been no necessity for St. Paul to have besought him to remain there until he himself might return, because that, as a matter of course, would have been the constant scene of his labors had he been their settled bishop. Timothy, therefore, was the assistant of the apostle, itinerating from place to place, as the exigencies of the times and the wants of the church might dictate to be necessary, but always under the direction of his father in the gospel.

That Titus sustained a similar relation to the apostle, and to the church at large, is evident from several parts of St. Paul's epistle to him. He says to him, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee," chap. i, 5. This is so similar to the charge addressed to Timothy, assigning the same reasons for leaving Titus in Crete as he did for leaving Timothy in Ephesus, that the same inferences follow in this as in the former case; and the whole tenor of the epistle shows that Titus acted under the direction of the apostle; for he says, in the words above quoted, that he had *appointed* Titus to this special service. And that he was no settled bishop in the island of Crete, is manifest from the following words:—"When I shall send Artemas

unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis; for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting, chap. iii, 12, 13. It appears from hence that Titus was to remain at Crete, doing "the work of an evangelist" only until he was relieved by the coming of Artemas or Tychicus, who probably were employed in a similar work, one of whom was to take his place in the superintendency of the church in that island. These facts prove that Titus was neither a located bishop at Crete, nor an independent diocesan bishop at all, for he acted under the direction of the apostle Paul, was subject to his removal at pleasure, and to have his place and office supplied by others whom the apostle should send for that purpose.

That these same persons were the successors of the apostles is equally evident. In his second epistle to Timothy, after giving him divers instructions in respect to his behavior as a minister of the Lord Jesus, and to the doctrine he was to teach, the apostle speaks of his departure as being near at hand, ch. iv, ver. 5, 6, as a reason why Timothy should use all diligence to "do the work of an evangelist," and to "make full proof of his ministry," that he might thereby be able, after the departure of his father in the gospel, to take his place in the church. And finally he gives to Timothy this solemn charge:—"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," ch. ii, 2. And for the purpose of completing the code of instructions necessary to guide his conduct after the apostle should have been "offered up" as a *martyr to the truth*, he requests

Timothy, as he did Titus also, to "do his diligence to come to him before winter." These all indicate that the apostle designed these two eminent evangelists to succeed him in the government of the church, as general superintendents.

Here then was a proper itinerating episcopacy, clothed with ample powers to superintend the affairs of the church, "to set things in order, and to ordain elders in every city," not resembling the restricted jurisdiction of either the congregational or presbyterial pastors, nor yet that of the episcopacy of the Protestant Episcopal Church. That it did not resemble the former is self-evident; and that it did not the latter, appears from this single consideration, the Protestant Episcopal bishops are entirely independent of each other, and each is confined in his jurisdiction to his own diocese; whereas those primitive evangelists were subject to an interchange of labors, to removals from one city and country to another, nor have we any evidence that the extent of each one's jurisdiction was defined by geographical boundaries.

This sort of government, however, is sufficient, I think, to justify the establishment of an episcopal form, whether all points of resemblance can be made out or not. And hence, although the power of ordination was possessed by the presbyters, the power of jurisdiction extended beyond the limits of their individual charges, and was exercised for the good of the whole church. Does not this furnish a precedent for the justification of those churches which have deemed it expedient to adopt an episcopal mode of church government carried out in a general superintendency? And I need hardly inform the reader that this general superintendency is provided for in the organization

of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and that its practical workings have thus far exerted a most beneficial influence upon the interests of religion.

Now all I wish to infer from this presentation of the subject is, that an episcopal form of church government is perfectly compatible with presbyterial ordination, and is therefore allowable on the principles I have attempted to establish. I say *allowable*—for I am very far from contending that it is so *prescribed* in Scripture as to make it universally binding on all Christian churches, or that it must be established in precisely the same form under all circumstances, and in all countries; because I am not able to prove that the apostles so established it in every country wherein they planted churches, nor that they intended it should be precisely the same in every period of the church. It is sufficient for my purpose that the conduct of the apostles in this respect furnishes a precedent for episcopacy. If this is made apparent, as I think it is, then is our church removed beyond censure for adopting this mode in preference to others, and Mr. Wesley and his associates are hereby exempted from all inconsistency in using the power of presbyters to organize an episcopal form of church government. The church of Alexandria was episcopal, though ordination was conferred by presbyters.

I design in my next to consider some of the most popular and prominent objections to the position I have herein attempted to sustain.

NUMBER XI.

Distinction between what is essential and what is simply expedient—Presbyters, evangelists, and apostles, ordained indiscriminately—Objections answered—Mr. Wesley's letter to Mr. Asbury—In what sense Mr. Wesley would not be a bishop—Did not object to an episcopacy—Was misinformed respecting Mr. Asbury—Mr. Asbury's refutation of the imputation of pride, &c.—His conduct vindicated.

The reader will bear in mind a sentiment I have endeavored all along to inculcate, which is, that while some things are *essential* to constitute an original church of Christ, others may be safely left to be regulated by the principles of *expediency*, under the direction of a sound Christian discretion. Thus, there can be no doubt that God has appointed that his church should be so governed that all things may "be done decently and in order;" that his ministers should derive their authority from him to preach; and that they should ordain others to aid them in extending the Redeemer's kingdom among men, and to succeed them in their holy office; all this may be admitted without resorting to the dogma that he has ordered them to establish such a mode of government precisely, and that all who dissent from this particular mode are intruders into his fold. These principles, I think, are clearly made out from Scripture and primitive usage. Thus a government may be episcopal in its form, without supposing that a third order is essentially necessary to constitute a valid ministry. And, moreover, the power of ordination may be committed to a third order, (I use the term order here for convenience' sake, to avoid circumlocution, and not as implying an order by divine appointment,) if the body of presbyters see fit thus to restrain their

own exercise of this power, without any violation of a divine precept, or any dereliction of duty. For while it is most manifest that the right of ordination did originally rest in the presbyters in apostolic days, it is equally manifest that Paul and Barnabas exercised the same power. Hence we read, Acts xiv, 23, that they "ordained them elders in every church" where they went, after their own consecration to this sacred work, preaching the word of life. But whether they did this by virtue of their office as apostles, or simply because they were so authorized in common with other elders—for so the apostles themselves were sometimes styled—it may be as difficult as it is unessential to determine. Assertions, unsupported by Scripture or authentic history bearing on this point, amount to just nothing. It is sufficient for our purpose that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders, and that Timothy and Titus, as assistants to the apostles, were instructed to do the same, and the same did also the presbyters; and hence we are authorized to believe that this power was exercised by either the one or the other, doubtless as circumstances called for it in particular places, and at particular times; and therefore it was not confined to either the one or the other.

Having premised thus much, I proceed to answer some objections which have been made to the Episcopal form of government as established among us.

1. The first is taken from what Mr. Wesley himself has objected to our calling ourselves episcopal. To sustain this objection, the following letter to Mr. Asbury has been quoted with a sort of triumph, as though Mr. Wesley himself wished to pull down with one hand what he had built up with the other:—

"TO THE REV. FRANCIS ASBURY.

"*London, Sept.* 20, 1788.

"There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the Americans, and the relation wherein I stand to *all* the Methodists: I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore I naturally care for you all in a manner no other person can do. Therefore I, in a measure, provide for you all: for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he would not provide were it not for me—were it not that I not only permit him to collect, but also support him in so doing.

"But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both you and the doctor differ from me. I study to be *little;* you study to be *great:* I *creep;* you *strut* along. I found a *school;* you a *college!* Nay, and call it after your own names. O beware! Do not seek to be *something.* Let me be nothing, and 'Christ be all in all.'

"One instance of this, of your *greatness,* has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called *bishop?* I shudder and start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool; a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content: but they shall never, by my consent, call me a *bishop.* For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this. Let the Presbyterians do what they please—but let the Methodists know their calling better.

"Thus, my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart: and let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely I am your affectionate friend and brother, J. WESLEY."

That this letter, though it contains a very severe rebuke, is full of tender feeling, is manifest. At the same time that it administers a caustic reproof to Mr. Asbury, for allowing himself to be called a bishop, it evinces all the tenderness of a father who is anxious for the welfare of his children. But the question arises, Did Bishop Asbury deserve this severe rebuke? I think not. And I think, moreover, that had not Mr. Wesley been misinformed in respect to some things, and especially in regard to some actions of Mr. Asbury, the former would never have used this language to his son in the gospel. While Mr. Asbury bore this reproof with becoming meekness, he was conscious not only that it was unmerited, but also that Mr. Wesley's mind had become biassed against him from the misrepresentations of others. This he alludes to in his journal. And although there is no man I reverence more highly than I do Mr. Wesley, yet I cannot but think that, in this instance, he indulged himself in too much asperity, and that he seemed to forget, in the moment of his displeasure, that Mr. Asbury, if he were a bishop, was one of Mr. Wesley's own creation, and therefore, instead of being censured, should have been commended. Nor can I help believing that if Mr. Wesley could have seen and borne witness to the self-denying life, the laborious services he performed, the plainness of his dress and manners, as well as the indefatigable perseverance in the cause of Christ all along exhibited by Bishop Asbury, he would have exchanged his dissatisfaction for an admiration of his character and conduct.

But was it the *thing itself* with which Mr. Wesley was dissatisfied? I think not. With the name of

bishop he had been accustomed to associate great pomp and ceremony, a high style of living, and a lordly demeanor over others. And so difficult is it to dissociate in our minds things that we have been accustomed from our earliest recollections to connect together, that it seems Mr. Wesley could not think of a bishop without connecting with that title all the external pomp and costly splendor with which it stood associated in the established church of Great Britain. And being informed, or, rather, *mis*-informed, that "Frank Asbury" had "become ambitious," was "thirsting for dominion," "could not bear an equal, much less a superior," and a thousand other such silly tales, which could be traced to no better source than envy and jealousy, Mr. Wesley verily thought it his duty to interfere, and give him this severe rebuke in time, before his love of "greatness" and his "strutting" should prove his ruin. This I believe to be the true secret of this whole business. Mr. Wesley was three thousand miles from the scene of action. He could, therefore, only see through other men's eyes; and there were those near him at that time who had been disappointed in America, and who sought to ingratiate themselves into the good graces of that great and good man by depreciating others. Hence the letter above recited; and hence also the necessity of a vindication.

But the opponents of Methodist episcopacy have inferred from this letter that Mr. Wesley never designed to establish an episcopal church in this country, and have even gone so far as to aver that the writers of the preface to our Book of Discipline have uttered a falsehood by saying that he took measures to secure it. This slander would hardly be worthy of serious

refutation had not some persons been beguiled into a belief of it by the subtle insinuations of those who possessed the means of knowing better. But that the objection might have some show of plausibility, the *name* which he gave to the first bishops of our church, namely, *superintendents*, has been adduced in support of it. This, however, is a most pitiful plea—a most slender foundation to rest such an assumption upon. The simple question is, Did Mr. Wesley invest Dr. Coke with power over deacons and presbyters? He certainly did. Did he also intend that both Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury should exercise a jurisdiction over the whole Methodist Church in America? He certainly did. Were not episcopal powers thus invested in them? They certainly were. That is, they were authorized to exercise a *general oversight*—not an unlimited, despotic, and unrestrained oversight—but a *general* oversight, under prescribed rules for the regulation of their conduct—over private members, preachers, deacons, and presbyters—and was not that an episcopal jurisdiction, to all intents and purposes, as much as if they had been *called* bishops?

After all, what is there in the title *bishop*,* when Scripturally understood, any more than *superintendent*, at which wise men need to take offence? *Episcopos*, Greek, *Episcopus*, Latin, *bischop*, Anglo-Saxon, all signifying an *overseer*, of any sort, are of the same import as *superintendent*, from the Latin, *super*, *over*, and *intender*, *to take care of*—and hence a *superintendent* is one that takes a general direction or oversight of any concern; and in an ecclesiastical

* See this word more fully explained in No. IV.

sense means just the same as *bishop* does among the Episcopalians. It was therefore simply for the alteration of this very expressive title that Mr. Wesley was displeased; and hence it is manifest that a man of his enlarged views would never have made the objections he did unless his mind had been biassed in the manner before suggested.

But we have farther evidence of Mr. Wesley's intention in regard to the sort of government which should be established here, in the Prayer Book he prepared for the Sunday, and other occasional services, for the American Methodists. This Prayer Book, abridged from that used by the English Church, a copy of which I have in my possession, was prepared by Mr. Wesley previously to the sailing of Dr. Coke for America, and was brought over by him most probably in sheets. In this book there are three forms of consecration:

1. *For superintendents.*
2. *For elders.*
3. *For deacons.*

These are all separate and distinct, the same as used by the English and Protestant Episcopal Churches, with the exception of substituting the title of *superintendent* for that of *bishop*. This is all the difference; and therefore it is denied that Mr. Wesley ever objected to our being an episcopal church, the above letter to the contrary notwithstanding. Is it, indeed, to be supposed that he would with the same breath constitute Dr. Coke a superintendent, and instruct him to constitute others superintendents over a church made up of presbyters, deacons, and preachers, besides the private members, and not intend it to be episcopal in its form? The thing is too absurd to need refutation.

There is a letter from Bishop Asbury, dated February 12, 1791, addressed to Dr. Coke, containing sentiments in such perfect contrast to the feelings and views attributed to him by Mr. Wesley, that I think my readers will be pleased with the following extracts from it. Whether the writer had any reference to what Mr. Wesley had said to him or not, I cannot tell; but it is such a perfect vindication of himself from those exceptions taken by Mr. Wesley, that it amounts to a complete justification of himself, and must be so considered by the many now living who can testify to its truth. He says,—

"I have served the Church of Christ upward of twenty-five years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses, the constant companions of my toil, six, if not seven thousand miles every year. Where we have no ferry boats, they swim the rivers. As to clothing, I am nearly the same as at first; neither have I silver or gold, nor any property. My confidential friends know that I lie not in these matters. I am resolved not to claim any property in the printing concern. Increase as it may, it will be sacred to invalid preachers, the college, and the schools. I would not have *my name* mentioned as doing, having, or being *any thing but dust.*

"I soar, indeed, but it is over the tops of the highest mountains we have, which may vie with the Alps. I creep sometimes upon my hands and knees up the slippery ascent; and to serve the church, and the ministers of it, what I gain is many a reflection from both sides the Atlantic. I have lived long enough to be loved and hated, to be admired and feared.

"If it were not for the suspicions of some, and the pride and ignorance of others, I am of opinion I could make provision by collections, profits on books, and donations in land, to take two thousand children under the best plan of education ever known in this country. The Lord begins to smile on our Kingswood school. One promising young man is gone forth, another is ready; and several have been under awakenings. None so healthy and orderly as our children; and some promise great talents for learning. The obstinate and ignorant oppose among preachers and people; while the judicious for good sense and piety, in church and state, admire and applaud. I am, with most dutiful respect, as ever, your son in the gospel,

"FRANCIS ASBURY."

Here is an instance of his *strutting*, namely, *creeping* upon his hands and knees, while ascending the steep and slippery mountains! And as to his *name* being associated with the college, he tells us that he wished it not mentioned as "being any thing but dust." Those who were honored with an acquaintance with that apostolic man know full well that none could surpass him for disinterestedness, for a perfect abhorrence of all pompous display, for high sounding titles, and worldly honors. He therefore bore the name of bishop simply because it was expressive of the office he held, as a convenient term of distinction, and not as the insignia of lordly superiority. Bishop Asbury was an example in word and doctrine, in spirit and practice, as well as in external appearance, in dress and manner, (and much more than all, in "labors more abundant," "enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,") of a primitive

evangelist, constantly devoting himself to the service of the church, travelling from six to seven thousand miles annually, and preaching generally every day! And of the purity of his intention, of the uprightness of his deportment, as well as of the singular worth of his character, Mr. Wesley himself bears ample testimony, and in no instance more emphatically than in the fact that he selected him to be a joint superintendent with Dr. Coke, over the American Methodists. The above letter, therefore, which has been seized on with an avidity, by certain writers and publishers of periodicals, which shows the greediness with which they devour every thing which can, even in any degree, produce an unsavory taste of Methodism, could have been dictated only under the influence of misinformation respecting the man to whom it was addressed; and while it evinces a fatherly solicitude for the welfare of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it shows a fraternal feeling for Mr. Asbury himself, even while it smites him with the severity of its rebuke.

I trust, therefore, that every unprejudiced mind will be convinced that the thing to which Mr. Wesley objected was the simple title of bishop, and not to the form of church government which had been established —and that for the most forcible of all reasons—because it was of his own creation, the child of his choice.

There are other objections which must be obviated. They must be deferred, however, to another number.

NUMBER XII.

Answer to the objection that Dr. Coke solicited the appointment of bishop—Mr. Moore's remarks—Dr. Coke's letter to Mr. Wesley—Mistake corrected respecting Mr. Asbury's words—His conduct vindicated—Dr. Coke ambitious only to do good—Proved from his actions—A man may seek the highest office with a view to extend his usefulness—He did not, as accused, doubt the validity of his ordination—Proved from his own words—His letter to Bishop White reconcilable with perfect sincerity—His plan of union rejected.

ANOTHER objection which has been preferred against the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church is, that Dr. Coke *solicited* the office of bishop from the hands of Mr. Wesley. To sustain this objection a letter from him to Mr. Wesley has been produced and published; and that our readers may have the whole subject before them, they shall, if they please, read the letter for themselves; for I am desirous, since I have been led, quite contrary to my expectations when I commenced these numbers, to examine this subject, to sift it, if possible, to the bottom; being fully conscious that there is nothing relating to these transactions but what will bear the closest scrutiny. Why should we shrink from considering any objection which either candor, ignorance, malice, or ingenuity can invent? If we cannot stand a close and impartial scrutiny in the light of Scripture and rational investigation, let us fall, as in that case we ought.

Mr. Moore, the last surviving trustee and the able biographer of Mr. Wesley, on introducing this letter to his readers, remarks, "that when Dr. Coke's incensed calumniator," namely, Dr. Whitehead, whose disappointed ambition led him to say many hard things of Wesley, Coke, and others concerned in those trans-

actions, "had got possession of Mr. Wesley's manuscripts, he found among them a letter written by the doctor to Mr. Wesley, which he thought would answer his wretched purpose. This document Dr. Whitehead has given entire," for the unmanly purpose, as it appears, of blackening the character of Dr. Coke, and gratifying the splenetic disposition of those of that day who were opposed to the proceedings in relation to American Methodism. And I may observe here that this letter has often been referred to since by such writers as seem to think it a virtue to load the name of Dr. Coke and Methodism with obloquy and reproach. Yet, as Mr. Moore justly observes, "when the circumstances of that day are considered, it will appear that Dr. Coke had much ground for the apprehensions which he expressed, and for the request which he preferred in that letter." "It being determined," Mr. Moore adds, "at Leeds that the ministers who were to assist Mr. Wesley, should meet him in Bristol, August the 9th, Dr. Coke sent him the following letter:"—

"HONORED AND DEAR SIR,—The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me *that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you*, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on brother Whatcoat and brother Vasey, for the following reasons:—1. It seems to me the most Scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches. 2. I may want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale. Mr. Brackenbury informed me, at Leeds, that he saw a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed, 'that

he would not receive any person deputed by you to take any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him;' or words which evidently implied so much. I do not find any the least degree of prejudice in my mind against Mr. Asbury; on the contrary, a very great love and esteem; and I am determined not to stir a finger without his consent, unless mere sheer necessity obliges me, but rather to lie at his feet in all things. But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against *all events*, and an authority, *formally* received from you, will (I am conscious of it) be fully admitted by the people; and my exercising the office of ordination without that *formal* authority may be disputed, if there be any opposition on any other account; I could therefore *earnestly* wish you would exercise that power, in this instance, which I have not the shadow of a doubt but God hath invested you with for the good of our connection. I think you have tried me too often to doubt whether I will, in any degree, use the power you are pleased to invest me with, farther than I believe absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the work. 3. In respect of my brethren, (brothers Whatcoat and Vasey,) it is very uncertain indeed whether any of the clergy mentioned by brother Rankin will stir a step with me in the work, except Mr. Jarratt; and it is by no means certain that even he will choose to join me in ordaining: and propriety and universal practice make it expedient that I should have two presbyters with me in this work. In short, it appears to me that every thing should be prepared, and every thing proper be done, that can possibly be done, *this side the water.* You can do all this in Mr. C—n's house, in your chamber; and afterward (according to

Mr. Fletcher's advice)* give us letters testimonial of the different offices with which you have been pleased to invest us. For the purpose of laying hands on brothers Whatcoat and Vasey I can bring Mr. Creighton down with me, by which you will have two presbyters with you. In respect to brother Rankin's argument, that you will escape a great deal of odium by omitting this, it is nothing. Either it will be known, or not known; if not known, then no odium will arise; but if known, you will be obliged to acknowledge that I acted under your direction, or suffer me to sink under the weight of my enemies, with, perhaps, your brother at the head of them. I shall entreat you to ponder these things.

"Your most dutiful, T. COKE."†

It will be perceived that Dr. Coke says in this letter that "Mr. Brackenbury informed him that he had seen a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed 'that he would not receive any person deputed by you to take any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him;' or words which evidently implied so much."

Now, without impeaching either the honesty of Mr. Brackenbury, or the veracity of Dr. Coke, it is seriously doubted whether Mr. Asbury ever gave utterance to such a sentiment. As it is manifest that many flying reports were circulated to the disadvan-

* Mr. Fletcher attended the conference in 1784, and was one of the meeting which Mr. Wesley called in order to consider the subject.

† Dr. Whitehead observes, "This letter is taken from an attested copy of the doctor's letter, in Mr. Charles Wesley's handwriting."

tage of Mr. Asbury about that time, it was very easy for Mr. B. to mistake, as he evidently quoted from memory, one of those unfounded reports for Mr. Asbury's own words, or even to misconstrue the words themselves; and this seems the more probable from the concluding sentence, which seems to be Dr. Coke's, "which evidently *implied* so much." This seems, moreover, probable from the fact that not only Mr. Asbury did not make any the least objection to receiving Dr. Coke, but evidently received him with the greatest cordiality and joy; so much so, that the whole congregation—for their first meeting was in the face of a large congregation—were melted to tears on beholding the affectionate manner in which they embraced each other. And in all their intercourse not a word transpired expressive of an unwillingness on the part of Mr. Asbury, either to acknowledge the authority of Mr. Wesley, or to receive Dr. Coke as a superintendent. The manifest reluctance also, arising from the humbling views he had of himself, which he at first evinced to take upon him the office of a superintendent, for which he had been designated by Mr. Wesley, proves that he was so far from being averse to the coadjutorship of Dr. Coke in the superintendency, that he rejoiced to "receive him as a brother beloved." But let us hear Mr. Asbury's own account of this matter. He says, in his Journal, vol. i, p. 376:—

"Sunday 15. I came to Barratt's chapel: here, to my *great joy*, I met those dear men of God, Doctor Coke and Richard Whatcoat: we were greatly *comforted* together."

Does this look like reluctance at receiving Dr.

Coke, under the authority of Mr. Wesley? And under date of the 26th of the same month he says:—

"I observed this day as a day of fasting and prayer, that I might know the will of God in the matter that is shortly to come before our conference,"—that is, the subject of his election and consecration to the office of a superintendent, and the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, agreeably to Mr. Wesley's instructions: "the preachers and people seem to be much pleased with the projected plan: I myself am led to think it is of the Lord. I am not tickled with the honor to be gained; I see danger in the way. My soul waits upon God. O that he may lead us in the way we should go!"

Not a word in all this in opposition to the authority of Mr. Wesley or Dr. Coke. Like a man who felt his dependence on God, and sought his will and direction, he prepares himself by *prayer and fasting* for the approaching conference, when the plan of Mr. Wesley and his associates was to be submitted to the decision of the preachers. As a proof of the respectful attention with which Mr. Asbury always received and treated Dr. Coke, as his senior in office, I will remark that when Mr. Asbury, at the request of the New-York conference, preached the doctor's funeral sermon, in the city of Albany, in 1812, I distinctly remember to have heard him say, that never a faithful servant waited on his master with more delight than he had done on Dr. Coke during their travels together in America; and in that same sermon he bore the most full and unequivocal testimony to the integrity, fidelity, usefulness, and exalted character of his deceased colleague. So much for that item in the above letter.

But those who wish to lower the character of Dr. Coke, and to throw an air of ridicule over the whole affair, have insinuated that he was actuated by an unholy ambition, merely because he *solicited* consecration by the hands of Mr. Wesley. That Dr. Coke was ambitious, I allow; but he was ambitious only to do good of every possible sort; to excel in the ranks of usefulness to his fellow men; and to receive that "recompense of reward" which God has promised to his most faithful servants. But that he was ambitious of distinction among men; to acquire human fame; to deck himself with worldly honors or grandeur; is more than any one has a right to infer from any of his actions. But was there, in reality, any thing reprehensible in asking this at the hands of Mr. Wesley? Let it be recollected,—

1. That it had been determined in a council held for that purpose, among whom was the sainted Fletcher, that Dr. Coke should visit America for the purpose of complying with the wishes of the American Methodists to be furnished with the ministry and ordinances of Jesus Christ, by organizing them into a church. The question very naturally arose, In what way can this be done with the least possible delay, so as to satisfy the scruples and meet the views of all concerned? Dr. Coke was fully aware that Mr. Wesley had no scruples in his own mind respecting the lawfulness, on Scriptural ground, of his exercising the power of ordination; that he only hesitated from motives of prudence, as a minister of the Church of England; and that now, such was the altered state of things in this country as to remove all grounds of hesitancy, that both the lawfulness and expediency of the measure would be vindicated.

2. Dr. Coke was sensible, as he was himself comparatively young in the Methodist connection, that he should need all the influence he might acquire in order to carry the projected plan into execution; and he fully believed at the same time—knowing the great influence of Mr. Wesley's name among the Methodists—that his receiving ordination, as a superintendent, from the hands of such a man, would give great additional weight to his character, and very much advance the object of his mission. These considerations led him to write the above letter to Mr. Wesley, soliciting him to invest him with "fuller powers," not by making him a bishop in the Church of England, but by consecrating him a superintendent of the Methodists in America.

3. In the next place, let it be recollected that the *object* to be accomplished by all this was the *salvation of souls*, and not any temporal, civil, or ecclesiastical aggrandizement. That the *motives* which actuated Dr. Coke were perfectly pure, whatever errors of judgment he may have committed, his whole life declares. Never did man, in modern times, submit to greater privations, labors, and even reproach from both friends and enemies, in order to serve the cause of Christ, and to advance the present and future happiness of the human family, than Dr. Coke. In addition to the immense labors he performed, as an assistant to Mr. Wesley, and as the head and soul of Methodist missions, as well as in his office of a superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, he made great pecuniary sacrifices, expending large sums from his own private income to sustain the cause in which he was engaged, and he finally fell a martyr to his work, in the midst of his usefulness,

while on his way to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the nations beyond the Indian ocean. I mention these things to show that he could not have been actuated by any impure or sordid motives. Let those who endeavor to load his memory with reproach, by fixing upon his character the foul stigma of a selfish ambition, exhibit as many marks of disinterestedness; make as many personal and pecuniary sacrifices to serve the cause of humanity; and perform the same amount of labor as ministers of Jesus Christ; and they will clear themselves of all suspicions of improper motives in their conduct, however much they may be mistaken in their estimate of the subject of our remarks. Had those idle clergymen, mentioned by Bishop White and others, from whom Dr. Coke dissented when he organized Methodism into an evangelical church, imitated the fervor of his zeal, and trod in his footsteps while he was itinerating through both hemispheres to convert sinners from the error of their ways, there had been less vituperation against him, and much more of the flame of piety enkindled in the hearts, and shining in the lives of our fellow men.

4. This being the *object* to be accomplished, it was entirely proper that he should bring to his aid every lawful means to enable him to effect it. To satisfy the doubts, and to remove the objections of all concerned, he earnestly sought, and, I think, very justifiably, to invest himself with all the authority with which Mr. Wesley could consistently clothe him.

But, say the objectors, he *sought* this. Who say this? The Protestant Episcopalians? They ought to be the last to make this objection. Did not Dr. Seabury *seek*, by every possible means, to conciliate the British episcopacy in his behalf? And, failing

here, did he not apply to and obtain from the Scotch bishops the episcopacy? Is *he* to be censured for manifesting this solicitude? And did not Bishop White, sanctioned by the American episcopal clergy, *earnestly solicit* the favor of the archbishop of Canterbury to lay hands on him? If any doubt this, let him read Bishop White's own account of his interviews with that prelate, in reference to this subject. And is that which was considered a virtue in these gentlemen to be converted into a vice in Dr. Coke? Why should *he* be made the "scape goat" to carry off the sins of all those clergymen who may have manifested an honest "desire for the office of a bishop?"

And does not the apostle declare, in the words just now alluded to, "He that desires the office of a bishop desires a good work?" More especially when he desires it, surrounded, as it was in the apostles' days, and as it was in the days of Coke and Asbury, with "labors more abundant," with numerous privations, and with none of the gaudy trappings of worldly glory? Is it any mark of pride, or of unholy ambition, for a man to desire to devote himself, in the most effectual way possible, for the salvation of souls? May not a man be even "moved by the Holy Ghost" to take upon him such an office? Though I allow that a novice may be elated with a little "brief authority," and through that vanity of mind which is the companion only of great ignorance, may swell and "strut," while he attempts to "magnify his office," and thus render himself ridiculous in the estimation of all sensible and pious men, yet, is it not possible for a man to *desire* and *seek*, by lawful means, to obtain even the highest office in the church, from the purest motives—simply because he may be more extensively useful?

Had Dr. Coke descended to trick and finesse—had he courted the ignorant, fawned to the great, withheld just praise and merited respect from those more worthy than himself, in order to accomplish his object, he might well be blamed for his temerity, and execrated for his vanity and double dealing. None of these contemptible arts, however, ever disgraced his proceedings. His soul, expanded with love to God and man, and athirst for the salvation of a lost world, submitted indeed to be vile in the estimation of the wise men of the world, and those who were governed merely by the maxims of human prudence, that his brow might be encircled with that glory alone which is the reward of winning souls to Christ. And while the names of his revilers "shall rot" amidst the sunshine of human praise and worldly grandeur, his shall live among those *wise ones* "who have turned many to righteousness." His artlessness, impelled on as it was by a strong and irrepressible desire to do good, may have betrayed him into errors; but these errors are more than atoned for by that untiring zeal and perpetual activity in the cause of Christ which characterized his career of usefulness, and which places his name upon the records of the church as one of her brightest ornaments and most devoted ministers.

From a careful, and, I trust, not a partial or hasty inspection of his whole life, as it stands recorded in his faithful biography, I consider this testimony due to his exalted character. And surely we American Methodists must say, even under the promptings of justice, that *if he were not an apostle to others, he doubtless was to us, for the signs of an apostle* which he first hung out are still visible among us in that excellent organization of ministerial order which he was

instrumental in establishing. And though his bones are mingled with the coral sands of the Indian Ocean—being suddenly arrested by death while on a voyage of missionary labor to the inhabitants of the east—it must not be forgotten that he had traversed the broad Atlantic no less than eighteen times, on errands of love and mercy to his American brethren. The name of COKE, therefore, will ever be associated with the worthies who founded the Methodist Episcopal Church, and hallowed in the recollection of those of her sons who take pleasure in "marking well her bulwarks, and telling the towers thereof." Nor is it more than a sacred duty we owe to departed worth, to rescue his name from undeserved reproach, and place it on one of the pillars in that temple of our glory which his own hands contributed to erect. I trust that the facts which have led to these reflections will be accepted as an apology for this token of respect to one who lives in the grateful remembrance of American Methodists, among whom ingratitude for past favors should be held as a reproach.

But there is another sentiment in this letter of no small importance. In the year 1791 Dr. Coke addressed a letter to Bishop White, proposing a union between the Methodist and Protestant Episcopal Churches, in which is the following sentence:—Mr. Wesley "did indeed solemnly invest me, as far as he had a right so to do, with episcopal authority." From this, as well as from the general tenor of the letter, some have taken occasion to say that Dr. Coke *doubted the validity of his own ordination.* But in the letter under consideration, he says, "I could therefore earnestly wish you would exercise that power, in this instance, which, *I have not a shadow of doubt,* God

hath invested you with for the good of our connection." This must for ever silence those who have the smallest confidence in the veracity and consistency of Dr. Coke; nor is there, when properly understood, any more than an apparent discrepancy between this solemn asseveration and that which he expressed in his letter to Bishop White. In the latter he says that Mr. Wesley invested him with episcopal powers as *far as he had a right so to do.* Did Dr. Coke, therefore, say that Mr. Wesley had no right to confer episcopal powers upon him? No such thing. As a presbyter of the Church of England simply, he had no right to confer episcopal powers upon another presbyter to exercise those powers within the English Church, or where that church had jurisdiction; but he had a right, as a presbyter of the Christian church, and as the spiritual father of the whole Methodist family, to ordain Dr. Coke, or any other competent person, to exercise episcopal powers over that spiritual family where the English Church had no jurisdiction; he had *no right* to constitute a man a bishop of the *English Church;* but he *had a right* to constitute a man a bishop over the *Methodist Church.*

Now let us try Dr. Coke's two declarations by these principles, so obviously true. In the first he says, *I have not a shadow of doubt but that God has invested Mr. Wesley with the right to ordain me a bishop over the Methodist Church;* but at the same time *I do doubt of his right to invest me with episcopal authority in the English Church;* and hence he says to Bishop White, in perfect consistency with this belief, Mr. Wesley "did indeed solemnly invest me, as far as he had a right so to do, with episcopal authority," and no farther: he did not pretend to give me epis-

copal authority as a bishop in the English Church—nor yet among the Methodists in England—and hence Dr. Coke never presumed to exercise his episcopal powers in England, except in the ordination of foreign missionaries. This view, I think, clears up the difficulty, and entirely removes the otherwise apparent discrepancy in Dr. Coke's language, vindicates his sincerity and consistency, and robs his enemies of their boast. Had Mr. Wesley pretended to ordain Dr. Coke with a view to his exercising episcopal powers in the established Church of England, he would justly have exposed himself to the contempt of all men.

As I have introduced this letter of Dr. Coke to Bishop White, I may as well finish what I have to say respecting it in this place, once for all. It is not necessary to recite the entire contents of this letter. It is dated April 24, 1791, and is addressed as a confidential* letter to Bishop White, and proposes a

* This letter and its answer may be found in the Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church, by Bishop White, p. 345, and the bishop's remarks in p. 168. He gives the following account of the circumstances, as an apology for its publication. He says that he "kept silence on the subject of it, except in the permitted communication to the bishops, until the summer of 1804; when he received in one day two letters from the eastern shore of Maryland. One of them was from the Rev. Simon Wilmer, of the Episcopal Church, and the other from the Rev. Mr. McKlaskey, of the Methodist communion. In a conversation between these two gentlemen, the former had affirmed the fact of Dr. Coke's application, which was disbelieved by the other. This produced their respective letters, which were answered by a statement of the fact. The matter being afterward variously reported, a copy of the letter was, after some lapse of time, delivered to the Rev. Dr. Kemp, of Maryland, and at last became published in a controversy raised in the diocese."

union between the two churches. This letter is no otherwise important than as it has afforded a handle to the Protestant Episcopalians to insinuate that Dr. Coke doubted the validity of his own ordination, and, as a consequence, the ordination of such as had been set apart by him. As to the first part of the allegation, it has been fully answered already. And as a farther confirmation of these views, and as proof that Bishop White should not have understood him in this way, Dr. Coke says in this letter, "Our ordained

Though there is nothing in this letter derogatory to Dr. Coke, only so far as he may have erred in his judgment by acting in so important an affair without consulting his colleagues or the conference, and even contrary to what he apprehended to be the wishes of Bishop Asbury—for he tells Bishop White, that "Mr. Asbury, whose influence is very capital, will not easily comply; nay, I know he will be exceedingly averse to it"—yet I do not think Bishop White's apology sufficient to justify the publication of the letter; for Dr. Coke makes this request, "One thing only I will claim of your candor—that if you have no thoughts of improving this proposal, you will burn this letter and take no more notice of it." I do not mean, however, by this remark, to censure the conduct of the respectable prelate to whom Dr. Coke unbosomed himself with so much freedom, but principally to show that Dr. Coke himself, as is manifest from internal evidence on the face of the letter, considered the whole business in a very crude state, designing his letter merely as feeler of the pulse, or as introductory to a more matured plan, should it be favorably viewed on both sides; and therefore he requested, in case it was not so viewed by Bishop White and his friends, the matter might drop, and his letter be burned. Those who have known these facts from the beginning, have always considered it one of those precipitate acts of Dr. Coke, which his best friends and warmest admirers cannot but acknowledge sometimes unhappily marked his conduct. He himself indeed lived to see and acknowledge his error. But that he either at that time, or any time thereafter, doubted the validity of his ordination, is denied on the best authority.

ministers *will* not, *ought not* to give up their *right* of administering the sacraments."

Here is as unequivocal an avowal of the validity of their ordination, by which they had acquired the *right* of administering the sacraments, as words could express, and this, too, in the very letter from which the contrary sentiment has been inferred. And surely if *their* ordination was considered valid, *his* from whom *they* received it, should be so considered. It is true, Dr. Coke says that he thinks "the generality of them, perhaps none of them, would refuse to *submit* to a re-ordination." This he thinks they would do for the sake of accomplishing the union which he proposed, and not from a conviction of the invalidity of his or their ordination. I give this, as I am authorized to do, as Dr. Coke's own views, without pledging myself to their correctness. I believe myself, that Dr. Coke's great ardor of mind to do good, and the thought that such a union would accomplish much, betrayed him into an error in this whole business; and that he misinterpreted the sentiment which generally pervaded the Methodist ministry in respect to a willingness to "submit to a reordination," in order to effect a union with the Protestant Episcopal Church. A union based upon equal rights and privileges, cemented by Christian love, producing a reciprocity of feeling and sentiment, and a combination of effort, might be productive of the happiest results; and to bring about such a union none would be more ready to lend his influence than the writer of these numbers; but a union that would require even an implied renunciation of rights which I consider as sacred among us as among others, having as strong a sanction from Scripture and primitive usage as those possessed by any branch of

the Christian church, involves a sacrifice too costly to be demanded at our hands.

It should be remarked that this letter was altogether unofficial, known only to Dr. Coke himself, not even to Bishop Asbury, nor yet to Mr. Wesley, and Dr. Coke himself has since affirmed that although he thought at the time a union with the Protestant Episcopal Church was desirable, and would have been mutually beneficial, yet that he had since become convinced both of the impracticability of the measure and of its inexpediency. Neither the Methodist Episcopal Church, nor Mr. Wesley, is to be held responsible for any suggestions contained in this letter; and though its contents speak favorably for the heart of Dr. Coke, yet I am convinced that he greatly erred in his judgment in making the proposition under the circumstances he did.

According to Bishop White's account of this matter, the thing was treated, when laid before the convention of that church in 1792, as it was in a proposition couched in general terms by Bishop Madison, as an impracticable measure; for he says, "On reading it in the house of clerical and lay deputies, they were astonished, considering it altogether preposterous;" and though some few gentlemen spoke in favor of holding out a desire for a union, the bishop adds, "It was not to be endured, and the bishops silently withdrew it, agreeably to leave given." [See Memoirs, p. 168.] Thus ended this abortive attempt at a union between these two churches, from which it appears that whatever attempts were made by Mr. Wesley to prevent a separation, or by Dr. Coke or others toward a union of this character afterward, there was no way to effect it, unless the Methodists had dissolved themselves as

a distinct body, and thus have annihilated all those peculiarities by which they had ever been distinguished; a sacrifice too great for the advantages to be derived from it.

The responsibility, however, of the failure, so far as any steps were taken, either to prevent the necessity of a separation or to effect a union, is shifted from the shoulders of the Methodists to those who rendered all such attempts nugatory—and there let it rest until a brighter day shall dawn upon the church and upon the world.

NUMBER XIII.

That Mr. Wesley intended to establish an episcopal church, and that Dr. Coke believed in the validity of his ordination, has been established—This farther proved—Dr. Chapman's objection answered—Why Mr. Wesley objected to the use of the title bishop—Charles Wesley's letter to Dr. Chandler examined—Makes nothing against our position—The conduct of John and Charles Wesley contrasted—John's preferred—A difference of opinion does not prove John mistaken—Our custom compatible with the principles laid down—Objection answered—The doctrine guarded against abuse—Compacts among ministers binding.

I TRUST the facts and arguments adduced in the two preceding numbers have established the two following propositions:—

1. That Mr. Wesley did *intend* to, and did *de facto*, establish a Methodist Episcopal Church in America.
2. That Dr. Coke never had any doubts either of the validity of his own ordination, or that of those who were consecrated by him.

And yet Dr. Chapman, who quotes some portions of the documents I have reviewed, and in a manner calculated to make an impression that he possessed a

rare treasure by having in his "possession those documents," comes to this grave conclusion :—

Mr. Wesley clearly shows, by his expostulation with Bishop Asbury—in the letter which I have published in the 10th number—"that he would not have the presbyter Coke, much less the lay preacher, Asbury, confer holy orders after the usurped example of the Presbyterians, and in virtue of his alleged concurrence or delegated episcopal authority." This unfortunate conclusion is founded upon that sentence in Mr. Wesley's letter to Bishop Asbury, which says, "Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better." Now what did the writer, Mr. Wesley, mean by this? Did he, *could* he mean that he did not intend that Coke and Asbury should possess and exercise episcopal powers? Can any man in his senses persuade himself to believe, with all the facts in the case before him—such as Mr. Wesley's own solemn acts in ordaining Whatcoat, Vasey, and Coke, as well as his designation of Asbury to be a joint superintendent with Dr. Coke, his letters testimonial, and his preparing consecration services for *deacons, elders*, and *superintendents*—I say, can any man honestly declare that Mr. Wesley never meant to establish a Methodist Episcopal Church? He who can believe this must also believe that John Wesley was one of the most consummate hypocrites that ever disgraced the annals of history! Dotage would be a feeble apology for him who could practise such duplicity. And if he who has studied the life of Wesley can say he believes that he was either a *knave* or a *fool*, he may despair of ever finding either an *honest* or a *wise* man among all the sons of Adam!

Could not Dr. Chapman understand what Mr.

Wesley meant by the phrase, "Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better," without resorting to the most uncharitable of all constructions, namely, that all Mr. Wesley had so solemnly done was only a religious farce! that Coke was yet only a simple presbyter in the Church of England, and that Asbury was naught but a "lay preacher?" Is it possible that he could so far impose upon himself as to believe that the great, the good, the holy, and indefatigable Wesley practised such deception upon himself and upon mankind? or that he had so lost his senses that he did not know what he had done?

Take the subject in the light I have placed it, and all is easy and consistent. Mr. Wesley, for the reasons already assigned, objected to Mr. Asbury's allowing himself to be *called* a *bishop*. Now, says he, "Let the Presbyterians do as they please," in this matter: let them allow their *presbyters* to be *called bishops*—which every body knows is the case among them, namely, that their *presbyters* are called *bishops* in their standards—if they please; but "let the Methodists know their calling better:" let them retain the more expressive title I have given them, that of *superintendents*, because it expresses, to a mere English ear, more definitely than does the exotic, ambiguous term *bishop*, the peculiar work to which they have, by the providence of God, been called; that is, to take a *general oversight* of the Methodist Church in America. This was Mr. Wesley's plain meaning—nothing more nor less. He doubtless had a predilection for this title, as it is that by which he had distinguished those to whom he had given charge of circuits; and he therefore wished to retain his own

technicalities; and more especially as the title *superintendent* fully expressed the nature and duties of the office held by Coke and Asbury.

But Dr. Chapman, in imitation of many others who had written upon this subject before him in a similar strain of invective, cites the letter of the Rev. Charles Wesley to Dr. Chandler, in which he strongly and pointedly disapproves of his brother's proceedings. But what does this prove? Why, it proves just this, and nothing more, that Charles dissented from his brother John in his judgment in respect to the matter in dispute. He does not pretend to impeach his motives: on the contrary he says expressly, "*He certainly persuaded himself that he was right.*" Nor does he, like Dr. Chapman, impute to his brother, whom he always venerated as his superior in all things, the nonsensical revery of having set apart a mere nominal superintendent, of creating a mere empty bubble, without body or parts, without powers and offices; for he says, in a strain of regret, it is true—for he lamented the fact—"my old intimate friend and companion has assumed the episcopal character, *ordained* elders, *consecrated* a *bishop*, and *sent* him to *ordain* lay preachers in America." Here the fact is asserted unequivocally by Charles Wesley, that his brother John had truly, though he doubted whether he had done it canonically, *ordained elders*, and *consecrated* a BISHOP, and had *sent* him to *ordain others* —thus unconsciously justifying Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury in calling themselves bishops, and refuting Dr. Chapman's assertion that he never intended to authorize Coke and Asbury to confer holy orders upon others. And yet Dr. Chapman quotes this identical letter to prove that John Wesley never *designed* to

establish an episcopal church! that he never *intended* to invest Coke and Asbury with episcopal powers! that he never *meant* to clothe them with power to "admit others to holy orders!" Surely, if Wesley could be convicted of duplicity equal to this, his name ought to be execrated by every honest mind.

In one particular Dr. Chapman is doubtless correct: when he says that Wesley "would not have Coke and Asbury confer holy orders after the usurped example of the Presbyterians."* Mr. Wesley understood presbyter and bishop, in the primitive acceptation of those terms, as expressive of the same order; and though he believed that they had the original right to confer orders, yet being attached to the general character of modern episcopacy, and not believing that the power of ordination was necessarily confined to them, he preferred this mode for the American Methodist Church, and hence provided for it by setting apart Dr. Coke to the office of a superintendent. In this respect, as well as in recognizing an inferior order of ministers called *deacons*—concerning which I shall show my opinion hereafter—he did indeed depart from the ministerial parity of presbyterianism, yielding, in this point, to the principles of expediency as they had been exemplified in the early periods of the church, in preference to a rigid adherence to what he considered was merely absolutely essential.

* I do not mean by this remark that our Presbyterian brethren have *usurped* the power of ordination; although I am fully convinced that their mode of church government does not accord so nearly with primitive usage, as if it were episcopal. Let the reader keep in mind the distinction between the power of *ordination* and the power of *jurisdiction*, and he can easily distinguish between a *usurped* and *legitimate* power of ordination in a presbytery, and between this and a general episcopal superintendency.

But "Charles Wesley dissented from the proceedings of his brother John." I allow he did. But, as before said, this proves nothing more than the simple fact—the *difference*. I dissent from Dr. Chapman, and it proves the naked fact, that there is a *difference* between us. The question is, *Which is right?* The Rev. Charles Wesley was unquestionably a great and good man. To him will the Methodist Church ever acknowledge itself indebted for his evangelical labors—more especially for those devotional hymns, so spiritual and evangelical, so strictly orthodox and poetical, and which will continue as the standard of its psalmody so long as there are hearts to relish and minds to appreciate either poetical excellence or deep religious experience. I would not, even if I could, detract aught from his well-earned fame as a Christian poet and a sound divine, for his praise is sung in all our churches. Nor were his labors in the pulpit either small or useless. His "preaching was with demonstration and power," and many, who were born unto God under his searching ministry, "will rise up in that day, and call him blessed."

Yet he must yield the palm, in every respect, to his brother John. To his pruning do his hymns owe much for their peculiar excellence. Though both were strict churchmen, and could hardly persuade themselves that any good thing could be found beyond the pale of the establishment, yet the shackles sat much tighter upon Charles than upon John. The latter, elevating himself far above things of merely an indifferent character, despising alike the censures of the bigot and the praises of the wise men of the world, broke loose from the cords of prejudice, and casting a prophetic look down the vista of time, he

saw generations yet unborn in America, for whom it was needful to have provided the bread and water of life. He heard the cry of those in this country who were destitute of the ordinances of religion. He felt the responsibility of his position. "Shall I"—doubtless he said to himself in his secret musings upon this subject—"shall I, from respect to the opinions of those I love, or from fear of the hatred of those who are watching me for evil—shall I sacrifice the *substance* for the *shadow*, and incur the fearful responsibility of denying those *poor sheep in the wilderness* the help they so greatly need?" Ever intent upon doing good of every possible sort, as far as in him lay, he could not withhold that aid in this emergency which he plainly saw he could both Scripturally and rationally afford them, for fear of trespassing upon certain ecclesiastical usages, sanctioned indeed by custom, but not commanded in the word of God. Being convinced what was his duty in the premises, he hesitated not to obey the admonitions of Providence, even at the expense of forfeiting the good will of his brother and others. He thus consented to become vile in their eyes, that he might be instrumental of saving the souls of those who were ready to perish.

Now the question is, who manifested most of the apostolic spirit; *John Wesley*, who thus laid a broad foundation for one of the most numerous and prosperous branches of the church of Christ on this side the Atlantic; or *Charles Wesley*, who, "straitened in his own bowels" by the cords of canonical orders, and rather than sacrifice aught of his predilection for church ceremonies, confessedly of an indifferent character, would have allowed those sheep to have been scattered abroad, and perhaps devoured by "wolves

in sheep's clothing?" I leave the reader to answer this question. Let him review the facts. Let him compare the circumstances already adduced. Let him also look at the actual results of what was sanctioned and done by John, and compare them with the probable results which would have followed the course pursued by Charles Wesley, and then decide which was in the right.

Another objection which may be urged against the arguments in favor of our ordination takes its rise from our own custom. It is asked, Why, if ordination by presbyters is Scriptural, have we committed that power to superior officers in the church, called superintendents or bishops? The answer is found in the principle all along recognized, that no specific form of church government is prescribed in Scripture; and that therefore it is left to the discretion of the church to regulate these matters as the exigencies of time, place, and circumstances shall dictate to be most expedient, and likely to accomplish the greatest amount of good; always avoiding any and every thing which God has prohibited. On this most obvious principle, that part of our economy which has committed the power of ordination to a grade of ministers superior in office to elders, is considered a domestic regulation among ourselves, supposed to be best adapted to our peculiar organization, and calculated to give a more energetic and diffusive spread to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nor is this peculiar to our church. Until some one of the denominations into which the three forms of church government are divided, namely, the Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, can bring a divine command, a "Thus saith the Lord," for its

distinctive peculiarities, each must acknowledge that it has been guided, in some things at least, from prudential considerations. Deferring the proofs in support of the position to a future number, I will now assume it as a fact, that in the early ages of Christianity those who were ordained presbyters or bishops considered it as their right to ordain others; but as this practice led to collisions and insubordination, and seriously threatened the peace and unity of the church, it was gradually discontinued, the power of ordination was restrained, until finally, from usage, it became a settled law of the church, that it should be exercised by those only who in after times were denominated *bishops*, in distinction from presbyters. This was a regulation which they adopted among themselves, as they supposed, for mutual convenience, never dreaming at first, I apprehend, that it would afterward be *so claimed* by these superior officers, as to disannul all ordinations performed by presbyters, however urgent and forcible might be the plea, from necessity or primitive usage. But such, it seems, was the fact; and they have not wanted successors in these modern days, who echo their pretensions in the same style of exclusiveness. More of this, however, hereafter.

It may be objected, moreover, that if the arguments adduced in favor of presbyterial ordination be sound, then may any number of presbyters in our own church perform the ceremony of consecration. This by no means follows. For if, as I think has been clearly shown, a church has the right of regulating its own internal concerns, of forming rules and regulations for its own domestic government, then it follows that all those who enter into this communion are bound, in honor and conscience, to abide by all such rules and

regulations. This, indeed, is the case with all voluntary associations, and all civil and ecclesiastical compacts. A number of individuals associate together for some scientific, moral, or benevolent purpose; that all things may "be done decently and in order," and move on harmoniously together, they adopt a set of rules, or frame a constitution, for the regulation of their conduct; and all those who join the compact bind themselves to the observance of the rules of the association. These are the terms of membership. So it is in all churches. Hence those who voluntarily connect themselves with any particular denomination of Christians, do, by that very act, bind themselves to the observance of the rules, regulations, canons, or by whatever name the laws of the association may be called; and so long as they remain members they are not at liberty, have indeed no right, to violate the rules which bind them together.

Well, the Methodist Episcopal Church has seen fit, thinking it has violated no Scriptural precept, to commit the power of ordination to a grade of ministers superior in office to presbyters, that it might maintain the primitive character of a general superintendency; and all those who connect themselves with this church do thereby agree to regulate their conduct accordingly; they are not, therefore, at liberty to trespass upon those rules, and thus disturb the order and harmony of the body; the presbyters, having resigned a portion of their original and vested rights into the hands of the superintendents, are not at liberty to reclaim them, except in a case of urgent necessity.

Such a necessity may exist. That very section in our ecclesiastical economy which provides for the episcopal office, and prescribes its duties and respon

sibilities, provides for the consecration of a bishop by the hands of the eldership, thereby clearly recognizing the principle for which I have contended: thus we read, "If by death, expulsion, or otherwise, there be no bishop remaining in our church, the general conference shall elect a bishop; and the elders, or any three of them, who shall be appointed by the general conference for that purpose, shall ordain him according to our form of ordination." This is one case of necessity which we as a church recognize as justifying episcopal ordination by the hands of elders or presbyters.

It is easy to suppose others. Suppose, for instance, the Methodist Episcopal Church should become corrupt, either in respect to the doctrines preached by her clergy, or in general practice, as was the establishment in Great Britain at the time the Wesleys arose—so corrupt as to call as loudly for a reformation in doctrine and morals—and two or more of her clergy should "lift up their voice like a trumpet," and show unto these fallen "people their sins;" and suppose that they should be instrumental in awakening a general interest in favor of pure religion, and God should raise them up helpers in their work, as he did to Wesley; and suppose, moreover, that the great majority of her clergy and people should so cleave to their iniquities as to set themselves in battle array against these reforming clergymen, treat them as schismatics, and expel them from their churches and the communion of the Lord's table; and suppose also that those holy men of God should apply to the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church to confer orders upon these helpers in the ministry, to whom it was manifest the Lord had "committed the word of recon-

ciliation," and their application should be contemptuously refused; and allowing that in the midst of all this struggle it should appear manifest to all impartial men, that these holy and evangelical reformers, instead of departing from the fundamental principles of Methodism, made these the foundation of all their preaching and practice, enforcing upon the people also those prudential regulations which Methodism had adopted for the regulation of the moral and Christian conduct of its ministers and members; *these* things, I humbly conceive, would amply justify those thus circumstanced to depart from the customary rules of ordination; and by furnishing them with a powerful plea in favor of a deviation from canonical order, it would be a case of *necessity*, the exact precedent for which would be found in the original organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Such a case, I say, would be an exact parallel to the one which existed in the days of Wesley.

And if the time should ever unhappily arrive when the Methodist Episcopal Church should become thus fallen, happy would it be for the world if some master spirit, Wesley like, should arise in the name of the Lord, to revive her doctrines and discipline, and to carry her ministry and membership back to her primitive standing and purity. Such a reformer would have a precedent in the conduct of Wesley and others of a like character, which would furnish him with an irresistible argument in favor of his proceedings.

But let no man plead that because he is dissatisfied with the conduct of a few individuals, or some non-essential things not at all affecting the vital interests of religion, he is thereby justified in departing from the established usages of the church in the par-

ticulars enumerated, and then cite the example of Wesley for his justification. Wesley did not fall out with either the doctrines, liturgy, or government of the establishment. Hence he did not begin his ministerial career by a whining complaint against oppression from his superiors or inferiors, nor yet by sounding an alarm about the doctrines and orders of the church. *His* sole object was to revive the spirit of piety *in* the church; and therefore he constantly appealed to the articles, homilies, and prayers of the church, as a defence against the assaults of lukewarm and fallen churchmen, making all his immense labors contribute to awaken a slumbering world from its lethargy, and to bring sinners to the "knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus."

How different this conduct from some of those who have set themselves up as reformers of the Methodist Episcopal Church!. These latter, instead of exerting their strength to reform sinners and to revive the spirit of piety, by a more energetic method of preaching and uniform enforcement of a Scriptural discipline, have generally fixed upon some unimportant point or item of church government as a theme for animadversion, and have bent their whole force to pull down that which their fathers and themselves had built up. This reprehensible conduct, mingled as it sometimes has been with slanders as gross as they were unkind and ungenerous, has led them to make war, not upon sin and sinners, but upon their brethren, who survived, and do still survive the conflict, only because their characters were and are beyond the reach of their vituperation. When we thus behold pretended reformers descend from that high and holy elevation on which true ministers of Jesus Christ always stand, to

deal in personal invective, in slander as vile as it is unchristian and unfeeling, it impels us to suspect the purity of their motive, and the soundness of their cause. Such, surely, can plead no Scriptural precedent, nor any other necessity than what originates from the corruption of their own distorted principles, for a justification of their conduct; and therefore, so far as they are instrumental in rending the visible body of Christ, they doubtless incur a fearful responsibility. He who strives to excuse himself for such unhallowed proceedings, by pleading the necessity of procuring a "morsel of bread," gives sad evidence that he values the present more than the future life, and that he considers *godliness* no farther *profitable* than as it "has the promise of the life that now is."

I mean not by these remarks to say, that a man may not, even after his entrance upon the ministry among us, be conscientiously convinced that it is his duty to withdraw from our communion. He may think that he has detected an error in doctrine or on some point of church order or discipline, to which he can no longer submit without a dereliction of duty. In such a case, after using all the helps he can bring to his aid to discover the truth, if he cannot conscientiously longer adhere to what may be required at his hands, his only alternative is to assign his reasons like a Christian brother, and silently retire, and go where he may think he can more effectually serve the cause of his Divine Master. But let him not, unless he wish his motives suspected, Parthian-like, shoot, as he retreats, his arrows at those he leaves behind him. Nor will he, I apprehend, if his heart be right with God, retaliate for his supposed wrongs by dealing in personal invective, and by manifesting

a greater solicitude to injure those he has left, than he does for the salvation of a lost world. This world, indeed, is but little benefited by the abuse that is poured upon a denomination by such as may have apostatized from its communion; and much less interest is felt by this same world in the wranglings of such individuals than an undue regard to their own importance might lead them to expect.

But to return from this little digression, which, however, seemed naturally enough to grow out of the subject, I think it follows from the premises laid down, that whenever a body of ministers and members have mutually agreed to a certain set of doctrines and code of laws, rules, or regulations, as Scriptural and expedient, and have bound themselves to abide by them, none of them have a right, unless convinced in the light of Scripture they were in error, or can plead such cases of necessity as have been enumerated, or some other equally plain and cogent, to disturb the harmony of the body by making a schism, or to depart from established usage to gratify whim or caprice.

In my next I design to attempt to confirm some views entertained in this, by an appeal to the proper authorities.

NUMBER XIV

The manner in which churches were formed and ministers ordained--The power of ordination exercised by elders and evangelists indifferently—Proved from Eusebius—From Jerome—Afterward restricted to a superior order—Examples from the Scotch Church and others—Hence episcopal powers were conferred by presbyters—Proved from sundry writers—Reasons for enlarging episcopal jurisdiction—Rural bishops employed—Results of this practice—Methodist episcopacy has a precedent in the itinerating evangelists.

In my last I assumed, as an admitted fact, that those who were ordained elders considered it their right to ordain others; and that in consequence of this practice being followed with, perhaps, too great a latitude, the peace and unity of the church became endangered; and with a view to stop the progress of this evil, as it was considered, the power of ordination was restricted, first by submitting the question to synods, and secondly committing it to the hands of a few ministers to whom a more extended jurisdiction had been intrusted. It must be evident to every person who has at all studied the early history of the church, that the apostles and their assistants, in order to secure the most diffusive spread possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ, itinerated largely through the land, and that, wherever success attended their labors, they planted churches, put them under a set of governors, whom they had "ordained elders" or bishops, to whom they committed the special and local oversight of the churches thus established, during their absence. Having thus "set things in order," they went forward into new countries, exploring every part of the land to which they could have access, and in all places in which it was demonstrated that the "Lord had much people," they fulfilled their aposto-

lic commission, by collecting together those who believed unto eternal life, organizing them under their proper officers, whom they ordained by prayer and imposition of hands. Those assemblies, thus organized, were denominated *churches;* their rulers, under the apostles, *elders*, or *bishops*, three of whom, it is stated, were considered competent to ordain others

That this was the primitive practice is so plain that it hardly needs proof. But that the reader may not rest his faith on mere assertion, after referring him to the Acts and Epistles of the apostles, which should be allowed paramount authority in all such matters, I will cite a few other authorities from the early historians in the church, to show that the practice was continued for some time after the death of the apostles and their immediate successors in this itinerating work. *Eusebius* is the oldest ecclesiastical historian we have. His history embraces a period of about three hundred years, namely, from the advent of Christ to the close of the third century. In lib. iii, cap. 33, he has the following passage :—

"Among them which were famous, was *Quadratus*, whom they say (together with the daughter of Philip) to have been endued with the spirit of prophecy. And *many others* also at the same time flourished, which obtaining the first step of *apostolical succession*, and being as divine disciples of the chief and principal men, builded the churches everywhere planted by the apostles; and preaching and sowing the celestial seed of the kingdom of heaven throughout the world, filled the barns of God with increase. For the greater part of the disciples then living, affected with great zeal toward the word of grace, first fulfilling the heavenly commandment, distributed their substance unto the

poor, next taking their *journey*, fulfilled the *work and office of evangelists;* that is, they preached Christ unto them which as yet heard not of the doctrines of faith, and published earnestly the doctrines of the gospel. These men, having planted the faith in sundry *new* and *strange* places, *ordained there other pastors*, committing unto them the tillage of new ground, and the *oversight* of such as were *lately converted* unto the faith, *passing themselves unto other people and countries*, being helpers thereunto by the grace of God which wrought in them." These *itinerating evangelists* and *successors* of the apostles, as they are here termed by Eusebius, were so numerous that he says, "It is impossible to rehearse all by name, when and who were the *pastors* and *evangelists*, in the first *succession*." I have marked those words and sentences in *italics*, to which I would especially direct the attention of the reader, as supporting the doctrine I have advanced in the paragraph preceding the quotation.

In his *fifth* book, chap. 9, the same writer speaks of the burning zeal of *Pantemus* and others who were employed in a similar work. Eusebius says, "He is said to have showed such a willing mind toward the publishing the doctrines of Christ, that he became the preacher of the gospel unto the eastern Gentiles, and was *sent* as far as India. For there were, I say, there were then, *many evangelists prepared for this purpose*, to promote and plant the heavenly word with zeal, after the guise of the apostles."

From this quotation, it is evident that the itinerating evangelists did exercise the power of ordination. But whether they were consecrated by the imposition of hands a third time for that purpose, or whether

they performed this service by virtue of their order as presbyters invested with an enlarged jurisdiction, is more than I am able to determine from any authentic history of those times. This practice, however, together with the exercise of the same powers promiscuously by the presbyters, finally led to contentions among brethren, destructive to the peace and unity of the body of Christ, some contending that improper persons were admitted to the sacred office.

In consequence of this it became necessary to adopt some general regulation in respect to the manner in which persons should be selected and consecrated to the office of deacons and elders. This view of the subject is supported by the testimony of *St. Jerome*, who flourished in the fourth century. In his dialogue with *Lucifer*, he says :—

*"*The safety of the church depends upon the dignity of the high priest, to whom, if some supreme power be not given, by all, there will be as many schisms as there are priests."* Some have quoted these words to prove that Jerome meant to assert the divine appointment of a third order in the ministry; whereas his object evidently was to show that this method was adopted as a matter of convenience, to preserve the church from being rent by parties. The same thing is asserted by *Antonius de Rosellis*, where he says, speaking of the ancient customs of the church, in respect to ordination, †"*Every presbyter*

* The following are Jerome's words :—" Ecclesia salus, in summi sacerdotis dignitate pendet, cui si non exsors quædam et ab omnibus eminens detur protestas, tot in ecclesiis efficientur schismata quot sacerdotes."

† Quilibet presbyter et presbyteri ordanibant indiscrete, et schismata oriebantur. (See Iren. pp. 275, 277.)

and presbyters did ordain indifferently, and thence arose schisms."

These two quotations fully sustain the postulatum laid down in the former number, that those who had been ordained presbyters themselves considered it their right to ordain others at their own discretion; and that this practice leading to confusions and schisms in the church, they were induced to restrict this right by confining the power of ordination either to one superior minister, or to a certain number of presbyters, after the candidate was approved of by a presbytery.

It seems, indeed, to follow necessarily from the principles already established; I mean from the fact that the apostles did not settle by divine authority any particular form of church government; that the primitive church was not at first reduced to any uniform and consolidated form, and hence no doubt that each insulated church was modelled and governed with some degree of peculiarity, regulating its affairs as the exigencies of the people might dictate to be expedient, so as to accomplish the greatest amount of good. But on the increase of the churches it became necessary to introduce more uniformity; and, to prevent too great a diversity of administrations, they abridged individual liberty, that the good of the whole might be the more certainly secured. That this was the case in respect to the power of the presbyters, so far as it regarded the government of the church and the conferring orders, is evident from the following facts, which I borrow from that learned and excellent work, so often quoted,—namely, Bishop Stillingfleet's Irenicum, see pp. 374, 375,* where

* Stillingfleet's book was published in 1662, at a time when

he is speaking of the supposed necessity of bishops as an order superior to elders, and contesting the question of their divine right. The following is the

the Protestant Church of England was much disturbed with conflicting opinions respecting the orders of its ministry and the mode of its government. This the author laments in most pathetic strains in his preface. In view of the contentions which raged within the churches in consequence of the freedom of inquiry which the emancipation from the shackles of popery brought with it, the author applies to the church the following touching lines:

"The eagle saw her breast was wounded sore,
She stood, and weeped much, but grieved more;
But when she saw the dart was feather'd, said,
Wo's me, for my own kind hath me destroy'd."

With a desire to heal the wounds which these contentions had inflicted upon the Protestant world, and to mitigate the asperities of religious controversy, Stillingfleet wrote and published his work; and hence the title, *Irenicum*, from Ειρω, which signifies to *knit*, or to *connect*; and in the New Testament is translated to make *peace*, because *peace* supposes the removal of those things which caused war or contention, and a *connecting* together parties which were before at variance. And as the author thought he must make war upon error in order to insure the peaceful triumph of truth, he also entitled his book "*A weapon-salve for the Church's wounds.*" How far it accomplished its benevolent object I cannot tell.

But to weaken the influence of his arguments, it is said that Stillingfleet afterward recanted his principles. I may reply to this in the language of Bishop White, that it was "*easier for him to recant than it is to answer his arguments.*" These will remain as a monument of his learning and diligence, and of his impartial regard to truth, when the memory of those honors which were heaped upon him in after days by the hierarchy of England, in calling him to fill the episcopal chair, shall be forgotten. It is not meant by this remark to impeach his sincerity, but simply to show that "great men are not *always*" *wisest* in their elder days, even when they attempt to correct the supposed errors of their youth.

substance of what he says on the subject. I say the *substance*—for I do not quote his entire language. He says, "If we may credit historians, some nations were without any bishops at all. If we may believe the ancient annalists of the Church of Scotland, that church was governed by their *culdei*, as they called their *presbyters*, from the time of their conversion, about the year 263, to the time they were visited by *Palladius*, in 430. In other places, as in France, after having been ruled a long time by simple presbyters, they finally, for the reasons already assigned, elected one from among the presbyters, to be head over the rest, with episcopal powers, as *Pothinus* was at *Lyons*. And we nowhere read in the early plantation of churches, where there were presbyters already, that they sent to other churches for episcopal power to ordain them." Hence it follows, that when the time arrived in which they thought it expedient to invest one of their number with a superior jurisdiction over the presbyters, for the purpose of preserving peace and unity, they selected one from among themselves, and three of the presbyters ordained him. A powerful precedent this, for the manner in which Methodist episcopacy was created.

And that this practice prevailed quite extensively in the church, during the latter part of the second, and more yet in the third century, is manifest from the same author, though he produces the facts for a different purpose than that for which I cite them. He quotes from *Sozomon* to prove that in *many cities* they had but *one bishop*. "That *Godignas* relates of the Abyssinian churches, which comprehended a vast extent of territory, there was but one bishop in its whole extent. *Theodoret* mentions eight hundred

churches under his own charge." Many others of a similar character are mentioned.

Then, again, "there were churches where there had been bishops once, but were afterward discontinued. So it was at *Rome*, when from the banishment of *Lucius*, and the martyrdom of *Fabian*, the church was governed by the clergy. The church of *Carthage* was twenty-four years without a bishop, during the invasion of *Hunerick*, the Vandal king."

These facts, all of which Stillingfleet supports by unquestionable authorities, are sufficient to establish these two propositions, both of which are recognized in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church:—

1. *That episcopal powers may be conferred on presbyters by presbyters.*

2. *That though these superior officers are not essential to the existence of a Christian church, yet they are allowable on Christian principles, and that the utility of their office is to be inferred from its tending to preserve the peace and harmony of the church.*

It will be perceived that it is not easy to fix on the exact date when the presbyters were thus restrained in the exercise of their full powers. It is manifest, however, that the custom of ordaining by presbyters simply, prevailed longer in some churches than in others, and that in those early days of Christianity, it was nowhere considered essential to the integrity of the church to have a *third order* in the ministry; although, so far as *jurisdiction* was concerned, it appears that superior ministers were recognized from the beginning. This will explain what is meant in the above quotations, where it is said that *one bishop* had so many churches under his jurisdiction. One

from among the rest, distinguished for his worth of character, was selected for the purpose of *overseeing* the general affairs of the church in a particular province—of presiding in their councils—and of dividing among the presbyters who were under his jurisdiction their separate fields of labor. In this particular, also, we have an archetype of Methodist episcopacy, in some of its more general features.

The facts in the case appear to be these:—The apostles, and, after their decease, the itinerating evangelists, had an extensive oversight of the whole church. These last, as may be seen by the quotation from *Eusebius*, were followed by others of a similar character and spirit, who, so far as they imitated their pious zeal and evangelical labors, contributed to advance the interests of Christianity among barbarous nations, as well as to bring the churches into greater consistency and order. As, however, the churches increased in number and wealth, these itinerating evangelists became more and more restricted in their labors, and this general superintendency gave place to one more local in its character, until the name by which they were distinguished became extinct, and was substituted by that of bishop.

Another thing which contributed to this result was this:—Those bishops to whom the charge of a church in a populous city was committed, soon found themselves in possession of flocks so numerous that it was beyond their power to attend to their wants personally themselves. In consequence of this, separate congregations were formed, over whom presbyters were placed, under the general supervision of those bishops; and with a view to supply these new congregations regularly with the ordinances of Christi-

anity, as they continually multiplied in the surrounding villages and country places, these *metropolitan bishops* —as they were finally called, by way of distinction from the country bishops—employed ministers of their own order, whom they denominated χωρεπισκοποι, *chor-episcopoi*, or *country bishops*, because they were sent into the country to superintend the affairs of the church. And though these *rural bishops* were of the same order with the presbyters, yet they were invested, for the time being, with superior powers in respect to jurisdiction, for the purpose of exercising a salutary control over the congregations they might visit. They doubtless resembled the presiding elders of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and Mosheim says, that during the fourth century this order was in most places suppressed by the bishops, with a view to extend their own authority, and to enlarge the bounds of their power and jurisdiction. [See chap. 11, cent. iv.]

By the introduction of this practice, which seemed at first innocently enough to grow out of the prosperous circumstances of the church, the power and jurisdiction of those bishops which occupied the principal cities of the empire were continually enlarged, and with this enlargement their claims were increased, and their pride and pomposity dangerously augmented, until, finally, each of these bishops considered himself the governing head and chief ruler in his respective province, or diocese, as the territory over which he ruled was thenceforth called. Hence we read of the bishops of *Rome*, of *Constantinople*, of *Antioch*, of *Alexandria*, and of *Carthage*, all of whom grew into importance in the manner I have related, and so extended the bounds of their jurisdiction, as to include within each many smaller cities, and even whole pro-

vinces, having presbyters, deacons, and a multitude of minor officers under their control. As each of these *metropolitan bishops*, as they came to be called, were considered equal in power and authority, from that equality originated jealousies and disputes, until finally the bishop of Rome, with a haughtiness unbecoming the character of a Christian bishop, asserted and obtained the pre-eminence over all his competitors, and was thence hailed, in the sixth century, as *pope* or *father* of the whole church. So dangerous is it to depart from the simplicity of Christ.

This historical sketch is given for the purpose of showing that the government of the church was gradually moulded into a more compact form, so as to meet the exigencies of the times, and to preserve it from being torn into factions, by too great a laxity in the exercise of discipline, and too much of a diversity of administration. And hence it appears that that which was adopted at first as a matter of convenience, from the best of motives, became an occasion of an opposite evil, that is, of concentrating too much power in a single person, by which the liberties of both ministers and people became prostrated, and popery, with all its unscriptural aspects and despotic features, obtained its usurped dominion. The itinerating evangelists, who succeeded and trod in the steps of the apostles, in exercising a general superintendency over the churches, were followed in the manner I have described by a local episcopacy, the members of which, instead of performing the labors, and submitting to the privations of their eminent predecessors, contented themselves with a nominal jurisdiction, performing their work by proxy—by the agency of those *rural*, or, as they have been called in more modern times, *suffragan* bishops.

Now in these itinerating evangelists we think we have an archetype of our episcopacy. It is well known by all those who have any acquaintance with our ecclesiastical economy, that those we denominate bishops have been from the beginning, and are still, itinerating ministers, to whom is committed, not as of divine right, but as a domestic regulation of our own, which we have found to have a most salutary influence upon the church, the power of ordination, of presiding in our conferences, and of stationing the preachers. All the difference, therefore, between us and the Protestant Episcopalians, in this point, is, they believe that for their order of bishops they have a divine right, originating of course from an express command of God; and that the power of conferring orders upon others has always, from the apostles' days, been confined exclusively to that third order; whereas we believe that this third order was not so established by Jesus Christ and his apostles as to render it perpetually binding upon the church, but that the power of ordination was originally bestowed on the eldership, and that they continued its exercise as their right until they voluntarily, from prudential considerations, relinquished it as above described.

In my next I design to examine this question of uninterrupted succession of a third order in the ministry, which the above doctrine of the Protestant Episcopalians involves. If it be sound, then will all my labor be lost, and the Methodist Episcopal Church will be found to be a continuation of an ancient schism with which the true church has long been afflicted; but if it be indeed sound, the consequences, I fear, will be equally fatal to all the reformed churches, and we must, to save ourselves from the curse of heresy,

go back to "mother church," and join with her, as reclaimed children, in worshipping a wafer god, and adoring the Virgin as the chief patroness of all the saints.

NUMBER XV.

The doctrine of succession—That bishops always existed is not disputed—This is not the question—True state of the question propounded—Succession not a divine institution—Not commanded; nor practised by the primitive church—The existence of a third order denied—For several reasons—It was a usurpation—Examination of Dr. Chapman on 1 Tim. iv, 4—Dr. Cook's Essays unsound—Triple consecration not proveable either from Scripture or the fathers—The contrary proved—The true state of the question.

I PROMISED in my last to examine the doctrine of uninterrupted succession, as claimed by the high church party both in Europe and America. That this subject may be fairly presented to the reader, it is necessary that he should clearly understand what is meant by this uninterrupted succession.

And let it be remembered, that the question is not whether there has always been an order of ministers in the church *denominated bishops:* this is not disputed. When, therefore, Dr. Chapman, who seems to be among the most confident advocates of this doctrine, says, "That actual succession has never been lost or impaired, because, ever since the institution of the Christian ministry, bishops have always existed, and always exercised what they considered the exclusive right to ordain and send forth their successors, and other laborers, into the vineyard of Christ," he advances—with the exception of the *exclusive right*—what no one disputes; but it is equally certain that

he advances and proves nothing to his purpose; for the question is not whether there have always been bishops, but whether there has been, from the apostles' days:—

A *third order* in the church, superior in order and office to those denominated presbyters or bishops in the primitive church, who, by virtue of this office, had the *exclusive* right of ordination. This is the question which Dr. Chapman should have stated and proved, in order to sustain his position. But this, I venture to affirm, he neither has proved nor can prove; and yet, until he does, his arguments are as fatal to his own cause as they are to those of his antagonists. As I have before said, if he will bring explicit proof of this point, I will, if his church will accept of me, consent to a reconsecration, and also induce as many of my brethren as I can to follow my example. There is another branch to this inquiry, equally essential for the maintenance of their cause. They hold, it must be remembered, that this third order in the ministry is a *divine right.*

Now what is necessary to constitute a *divine right?* It must be *divinely instituted. It must rest on an express and explicit command of God.* Nothing less than this will suffice to constitute any ordinance or ceremony divine. But it requires more than this to establish this doctrine of the divine institution of diocesan episcopacy, as held by a portion of the Protestant Episcopalians. They must bring an explicit command that this institution is of *perpetual obligation in the church, in all ages, and under all circumstances.* For there have been divine ordinances, specially instituted by the command of God himself,—such, for instance, as circumcision and the sacrifices, under the

law—which are not of perpetual obligation. Nor is it necessary only to prove that the apostles did thus and so; for they did some things which are not binding upon the church now: so St. Paul circumcised Timothy—made a vow, and shaved his head, and went into the temple, according to the Jewish method of purification. But these practices, surely, are not binding upon Christians.*

These two things, therefore, our antagonists must make out unequivocally from the plain command of God:—

1. That a third order in the Christian ministry, superior to what were called in the apostles' days presbyters or bishops, is a divine institution, so constituted by an explicit command of God.

2. That this order has been uninterruptedly continued in the church from the apostles' days to the present time, and that to them belongs the exclusive right of ordination.

I deny both these propositions—and demand the proof.

Here, in all fairness, I might rest the cause, for the *onus probandi*, the burden of the proof, rests upon them. No man is bound to prove a negative. I might,

* I do not mean by this remark to say, that, if it can be proved the apostles did establish the form of church government now recognized by the Protestant Episcopalians, that we are not bound to follow it. Such an establishment, I allow, would be a precedent sufficient to justify them in their proceedings, and to nullify their antagonists' arguments. But I deny, and found my denial on the testimonies previously produced, that the apostles or their immediate successors ever established such a government—that they ever did make it such an essential feature in the Christian ministry, that there must be a *third* order, to which belonged exclusively the power of consecrating others.

therefore, so far as justice is concerned, here close my arguments, and assume it as undeniably established that no such divine institution exists, and that no such succession can be sustained.

But I will not avail myself of this advantage. I will undertake to prove a negative—not indeed that God never commanded such a thing—by bringing a command that it should *not be*—but all the negative proof of which the subject admits, I have; and that is, the total absence of all positive proof—*there is no such command in all the Bible.* He who disputes this proof is at liberty to bring the command—and that will settle the question. Until this is done—and I think it never will be—I am justified in considering this point established—*that there is no such divine right.* It rests solely on an assumption of human authority, and, therefore, is binding upon no man—upon no church—to keep up a third order in the ministry, except upon such as have made it so by a voluntary compact.

But that such a third order did not exist in the Christian church from the days of the apostles, to whom the exclusive right of ordination belonged, I have already proved from all those testimonies I have brought to substantiate the position that presbyters did ordain in the apostolic days, and for more than three hundred years afterward. Until, therefore, this mass of testimony is set aside by counter testimony, more numerous and strong, this labor is already performed, and by it the doctrine of an uninterrupted succession of a third order superior to presbyters, is annihilated. This pretended unbroken chain is severed, or rather was never completed, because it lacks the links necessary to make it extend back from the beginning of the

fourth to the beginning of the first century. Let its advocates supply these lost links if they can—and if they cannot, as I aver, and am ready to retract whenever they will produce them, then let them acknowledge their incompetency to the onerous task they have imposed upon themselves.

The reader must indulge a little repetition and latitude on this branch of the subject, more especially as it is the strong hold of the sticklers for the divine right of diocesan episcopacy. I must therefore be permitted to recapitulate in substance my proofs in favor of presbyterial ordination in the apostolic days:—

1. *St. Paul and Timothy were ordained by presbyters.*

2. *The Alexandrian church ordained by presbyters.*

3. *The presbyters claimed it as their right originally to ordain others.*

4. *This practice continued in the church for more than three centuries.*

Here then, during all this time, there was no essentiality pleaded in favor of a third order above presbyters to constitute a valid ordination.

That the apostles and their successors ordained, and that those who succeeded them in the government of the church did the same, makes nothing in favor of the assumption here exploded. Though they did this, we have no proof that they were consecrated especially for that service; and that it was not considered their exclusive right is demonstrable from the fact—a fact as strongly supported as any found upon the historic page—that presbyters did actually ordain others. The succession therefore is void. It is

indeed "a fable" of man's invention. I fearlessly pronounce it such, and challenge the proof of its reality.

But to sweep this cobweb from the shelf of ecclesiastical libraries, where it has lain as an entangler for the flies of clerical upstarts, I will refer the reader to the facts, distinctly stated in my previous numbers, which prove that—

Presbyters did claim and exercise the power of ordination for more than three hundred years, and in the Scotch Church until the year 430.

This being the fact, it undeniably follows, that whenever the exclusive right of ordination was *claimed* —I do not say *exercised* merely—by a third order as distinct from and superior to presbyters, it was a *usurpation*. And hence it follows, that those who perpetuate this claim to the exclusion of all others are upholders of an ancient *usurpation over the rights and liberties of the presbyters*. This remark does not apply to those presbyters who, for good and justifiable reasons, voluntarily relinquished their rights of order and jurisdiction. But I repeat, *that those who have set up this exclusive claim*, as an *indispensable prerequisite to a valid ordination, have* USURPED *powers which did not belong to them*; and that those who plead for its continuance in a third order are justifiers of this same USURPATION, in defiance of Scriptural authority and apostolic usage.

As, however, I have several times alluded to Dr. Chapman's discourses on this subject, it seems proper that I should examine some of his assertions in favor of this supposed divine institution of a third order in the ministry. In commenting upon the passage before quoted, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which

was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," he says, "The preposition, WITH, at most, merely implies concurrence, and not the creative power asserted in the parallel passage: Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee BY the putting on of my hands." This criticism manifestly shows the lameness of the cause he was anxious to sustain.

It is evident that the apostle could not with any propriety use the same preposition when speaking of the association of the presbytery in the consecration of Timothy that he did when speaking of his own singly;* and hence he uses the preposition WITH, which not only denotes concurrence of will, but a concurrence in *the act itself*, whatever it was, by which the "gift" was conferred upon Timothy; so that whatever *creative powers* were asserted to have been bestowed upon him, they were the *joint act* of all the presbyters who laid hands ON him. Can any other consistent interpretation be given to the passage? "Yes," says Dr. Chapman, "it merely implies a concurrence." But what sort of a concurrence? It is most manifest from the text that it was a concurrence of *action*—a *united* or associated *act* of the presbytery *alone*—for the apostle does not even mention himself as taking any part in the ceremony. He does not say the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*, together with *my own*. I allow indeed that, taking the parallel passage, it is possible that the presbyters might have been associated with the apostle in the act of consecration, yet the probability is that the apostle first ordained Timothy a deacon, and that afterward he

* WITH the putting on of *my* hands, would have been a very awkward expression.

was set apart to the office of an elder by the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, the apostle possibly acting as president of the council. Be this as it may, no just criticism can do away the plain declaration of the apostle, that Timothy had been inducted into his high office, not merely by the "concurrence," consent, or will, but "by the LAYING ON of the hands of the PRESBYTERY." Here, therefore, one of the chief links is wanting to the chain of the uninterrupted succession of a third order in the ministry, claiming the exclusive right of ordination; for whatever Timothy was, whether an apostle or a diocesan bishop of Ephesus—and our author claims him in both of these characters—evangelist, elder, or presbyter, he was created such by the imposition of the hands of presbyters. All, therefore, which Dr. Chapman says about the apostolic character of Timothy, makes nothing in favor of his cause. The higher Timothy is exalted, the more dignity is conferred upon presbyters; for whatever he was in an ecclesiastical sense, he was made such by those who consecrated him to his office. But, before Timothy can be set up as a precedent for the exclusive right of ordination in a third order, superior to presbyters, it must be proved that he himself was consecrated *three* several times —first, a deacon—secondly, an elder—and thirdly, a bishop, or an apostle, by some one who had himself been thus consecrated in the same manner and for the same purpose. Will Dr. Chapman, or some of his "distinguished converts"—for he boasts that he has "reclaimed a large number from the ranks of schism" —bring from his "elaborated array of facts" a proof that Timothy, or any one of the apostles or their assistants, received this *triple* induction into office?

And let it be remembered, that until this is done, their "array of facts, the result of intense and unwearied application,"* will pass for nothing. They may prove that all who ordained others were denominated *bishops*, or even *apostles*, and I will not dispute them, simply because it will not touch the point in controversy. But one clear passage, well authenticated, proving that those thus denominated bishops in the first two centuries, passed up under the imposition of the hands of some one who had himself been *thrice* ordained, through the first and second grade to the third order—

* See preface to the second edition of Dr. Chapman's "Sermons upon the Ministry, Worship, and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church." In these sermons, if I rightly comprehend the author, he sets up the most rigid claims to high apostolic authority, and an unimpaired succession of a third order in the ministry, not allowing even a case of the most urgent necessity a justifiable excuse for a deviation from his rule.

I suppose the "distinguished convert" to whom Dr. Chapman alludes in this preface is JOHN ESTON COOK, M. D., who has published the reasons of his conversion to high episcopalianism. I have looked over his Essay with some degree of attention, and cannot but observe the loose manner in which he has jumbled things together, the whole performance evincing the absence of that nice discrimination which is indispensable to an accurate examination of such a subject. For instance, he confounds *order* with *office*; so that because he finds bishops having charge of presbyters, hastily concludes the former were a higher *order* in the ministry; and then, without bringing a single proof, either from the Sacred Scriptures or the early fathers, he illogically infers that these bishops were created such by a triple consecration. This is all gratuitous assumption.

Again: Dr. Cook confounds the first, second, third, and fourth centuries together, and concludes, that because he finds bishops with diocesan powers in the third and fourth centuries, therefore they derived their powers from apostles; not considering that an unscriptural usurpation of assumed powers began to show itself at this period of the church. His quotations, therefore, from the fathers of the third and fourth centuries in favor

and the question is settled, the controversy ends, and diocesan episcopacy triumphs in the divinity of its original.

This, however, has never yet been done, and I fully believe never will.

And yet, until it is done, "boasting is excluded" from the ranks of apostolic successionists.

Or, if they will bring an express command of God that so it must be, and not otherwise, we will yield the point—though it will be with reluctance that we should consent thus to impeach apostles, bishops, and presbyters, for having left undone that which God had positively commanded.

The same remarks will apply to what the above author has said respecting the testimony of Jerome, Polycrates, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others,

of a *third* ORDER prove just nothing. The mitred heads of the fourth century were as little like the crowns which adorned the brows of the apostles and their immediate successors, as the gowns of modern diocesans are like the *cloak* of St. Paul. The halo of glory which surrounded those first ministers of Jesus Christ, and the highest rulers in the church, coming from the "Sun of righteousness," was reflected through a medium which resembled more the "crown of thorns" which was worn in mock dignity by the Saviour of the world, than it did the gaudy mitres of some of their pretended successors.

Any one, therefore, who would present us with an archetype of the true church of Christ, must not seek among the rubbish of the third and fourth centuries, but go back to the golden days of the first, or at least to the silvery records of the second century, to furnish himself with materials.

To speak without metaphor, he must distinguish between *apostles* and *bishops*, between the power of *ordination* and the power of *jurisdiction*, between *order* and *office*, and also between the name of an officer in the church, which is his ecclesiastical designation, and the name derived merely from age and that dignity of character acquired from a long and laborious service.

respecting the bishopric of Timothy and Titus. Allowing that they were diocesan bishops—which I do not believe—still the question returns with all its force, Were they made such, as to order, by a *triple* consecration? And then, Did they possess the *exclusive* right of ordination? Until the affirmative is given to these questions—and I believe it never can be truly—the admission goes for nothing. And as "from nothing, nothing comes," so those who undertake to derive their succession from this imaginary source, build only aerial castles, which the smallest puff of truth demolishes, and leaves not even "a wreck behind."

The most, therefore, that can with any show of truth and justice be claimed, is that some time in the fourth century these pretensions began to be set up in favor of the exclusive right of ordination in a third order, superior to presbyters. And every body knows that this was the period of the church when corruption began to make its fearful inroads among both clergy and people, the former leading the way by their lordly example, their love of pomp and worldly grandeur. It was at this period also, the empire having become nominally Christian under the dominion of Constantine, that the ecclesiastics began to shape and mould the government of the church after the model of the empire. As they found the latter divided into provinces under the guardianship of governors appointed by the emperor, so those bishops, ambitious to distinguish themselves as the successors of the apostles, divided the church into separate districts, after the manner of the civil divisions, with a bishop of enlarged powers at the head of each diocese, with his presbyters, deacons, and divers other inferior

officers, under his jurisdiction; and with a view to enhance the assumed dignity of his character, he made continual encroachments, being aided by general councils, which had now become more common than heretofore, upon the rights and liberties of the presbyters and people, until finally, after a long and bitter struggle between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, almost all power was concentrated in a single head, namely, in the bishop of Rome.

Here, then, in this accumulating mass of moral and spiritual pollution, we may fix the source of that assumption of the exclusive right of ordination in a third order, which is now claimed by high-toned Episcopalians. And if it will afford them any consolation, I will not dispute with them the noble prerogative of setting their claims to this high antiquity. But if they will trace it to any more remote period, and to a purer source, by bringing passage, chapter and verse, I will most cheerfully retract all I have said in opposition to it.

But let them not doge the question. Let them not tell us that there has always been an order in the church called bishops, who claimed the right of ordination. This is not disputed. They must bring testimony, strong and unequivocal, that there has always been a third order, made such by a triple consecration, to whom *alone* belonged the right of investing others with holy orders; and to make good their claim to a divine right for this order as essential to a valid ministry, they must also bring an *express command of God* that thus it must be, and not otherwise; yea, they must go a little farther still—they must show us the genealogical table, with the names of the bishops inserted, of this third order, without a single

chasm, if they would make good the validity of their *own* ordinations, from either the first bishop of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, or Carthage; and they must moreover prove that the first bishop who occupied the episcopal chair in the diocese from whence they choose to trace their descent, was himself ordained thrice by another bishop who had been ordained by a triple consecration; or else show that the Lord Jesus Christ himself placed him there, and by an explicit warrant invested him with these exclusive powers.

This is their work. And as I have before, so again I deny each and all these assumptions. I challenge the advocates of an unbroken line of succession to the proof of either or all of them.

In the meantime, I have not yet done with this subject of apostolic succession. I shall endeavor to show, by other testimonies, not only that "it is a fable of man's invention," but that it had its origin as above suggested, in human pride and spiritual pollution—that *God has frowned upon it*, and that he claims the awful prerogative of *dashing it to pieces* whenever, as it has often done, it stands in the way of his working. I pledge myself, life and health permitting, to bring the word of God itself to show that a priesthood, though it may be nominally in the line of succession which God himself had established, has made, and therefore may again make itself obnoxious to his sore displeasure, by its manifest and flagrant abuses of his mercies, and of its own privileges.

Before, however, I come to this branch of the topic, it will be my endeavor to examine this pretension in the light of some more historical facts, presented to us in the annals of the church, and particularly the genealogical tables of Eusebius and others, on which

so much dependence is placed for the maintenance of this fabled succession.

NUMBER XVI.

Same subject continued—Dr. Chapman's assertion in favor of succession unsupported—Tables in Mosheim, derived from Eusebius, apocryphal—If true, not in point—Quotation from Drew, proving the fabulous character of the doctrine of succession—Stillingfleet against succession—Dr. Calamy also—Church of Alexandria—of Antioch, all uncertain—Succession of Rome equally dubious—Contradictory accounts of the writers on this subject—No dependance should be placed on the succession.

THIS doctrine of an unbroken succession, being a bugbear by which weak and timid minds have been frightened into a belief that the true church is to be found only among those who can trace their origin through an uninterrupted line of bishops of a *third order* in the ministry, deserves farther consideration. Hence I promised, in my last, to look at those ecclesiastical tables to which reference has been made by Dr. Chapman and others. That gentleman has affirmed, p. 104 :—

"Those whom we are accustomed to honor as fathers of the church, always preserved with the greatest care the catalogue of bishops in the respective sees, from the beginning; and that they have been in several instances continued down to our own age, may be seen in that celebrated work of the historian Mosheim."

To have sustained his doctrine he should have furnished his readers with this alleged catalogue entire. Instead of this he assumes as truth what he could not but know his antagonists deny, and then concludes,

most illogically, the truth of his hypothesis in favor of this disputed theory of succession. This is just as fair as if I were to affirm, without proof, that St. Paul planted the gospel, in person, in the British islands; ordained bishops, elders, and deacons; and that from this an unbroken line had descended until it had reached his grace, the archbishop of Canterbury, from whom Bishop White received his consecration; and therefore the American episcopate is truly apostolic in its character, "as may be seen in that celebrated work" of the late rector of Christ Church, Lexington, Ky., G. T. Chapman, D. D., for he has affirmed that such a succession has actually existed from the apostles' days to the present time! This the intelligent reader will perceive is mere assertion, without a particle of proof.

Now, on turning to the tables of Mosheim, I find the following note of the historian, at the commencement of his catalogue: "The succession of the first bishops of Rome is a matter full of *intricacy and obscurity*. We shall, however, follow the learned Bishop Pearson." Following this guide, Mosheim places *Linus*, whom St. Paul mentions in his second epistle to Timothy, chap. iv, 21, at the head of the list, and as succeeding Paul and Peter. According to this, *Linus* died in the year 79, about forty-six years after the crucifixion. Now the question is, From whom does the historian derive his information respecting this list of bishops? Undoubtedly from Eusebius. Well, what does he say in respect to the catalogue which he furnishes?

In book iv, chap. v, he says:—

"We have not ascertained, in any way, that the times of the bishops of Jerusalem have been regularly

preserved on record, for *tradition* says that they lived but a very short time." In another place, when speaking on this same subject, he says, "as it is reported."

This hypothetical manner in which Eusebius speaks concerning the vouchers for what he records, doubtless induced Mosheim to say that the subject was involved in much "intricacy and obscurity." Did such obscurity rest upon any other article of faith, considered of as much vitality to the Christian system as high-toned Episcopalians profess to attach to this, the infidel might well reproach us for our credulity. A tenet for which neither command nor precedent is to be found in all the Bible; that rests solely on uncertain tradition; that has been contradicted by some of the wisest and best men in the purest periods of the church; that was not broached, according to *Geiseler*, until after the reformation commenced; a tenet of such a dubious character surely ought not to be made a term of church communion, or a badge of orthodox membership. It is not, in the estimation of its advocates, one of those exceptions to a general rule, which proves the existence of the rule itself; but is, according to them, a cardinal point, of perpetual and universal obligation; so much so that there can be no valid ministry nor ordinances without it.

Yet, even if the list in question were perfect, it would prove nothing in favor of their hypothesis, until they can show that all these bishops were inducted into their respective sees by a *triple* consecration, the first in the line from the hands of the apostles, or from some bishops who had themselves been thus consecrated.

Let it not be forgotten, that this is the question on the truth of which the doctrine of succession rests.

Allowing, therefore, that this catalogue in Mosheim is authentic, derived as it is for the first three hundred years from the uncertain tradition of Eusebius, it no more proves that a *third order* is essential to constitute a valid ministry, than it does that the bishops of the seven churches of Asia were celestial beings, sent down from heaven to preside in the councils of men, merely because they are denominated the *angels* of the churches. And that the first bishops in the church received this *triple* consecration is what no man can prove; nor yet that any of the apostles, their assistants, or immediate successors, were thus inducted into their office. But until this is done, the doctrine of an unbroken line of diocesan bishops, invested with the *exclusive* right of ordination, must be classed among the nudities of antiquity, the deformities of which modern sculpturists endeavor in vain to hide by throwing over it the tattered robe of an ecclesiastical succession. The closer it is inspected, the more glaring do its deformities appear.

On this subject I beg permission to avail myself of the following extract from the biography of Dr. Coke, by the late Mr. Samuel Drew, which will present some of the difficulties in which this question is involved; and until the arguments here presented are overthrown, we have a right to consider them incontrovertible:—

"Eusebius, who to us is the first spring of ecclesiastical history, after the Acts of the Apostles, tells us, in the very beginning of his narrative, that one thing he primarily had in his eye, was to give us an account of the apostolical succession. But lest we should raise our expectations too high, he very fairly informs us that this was a new work, where he could

trace no footsteps of others going before him, except in a few particular narratives. This was honest. And if, after this fair warning, we place an implicit confidence in the accounts which he gives from the reports of others, we have more reason to accuse ourselves with being self-deceivers, than to charge him with imposition.

"As to the apostles, he informs us that all the accounts he can procure, say that they went about the world, publishing the Christian faith. He adds, that it was *reported* by his predecessors, that Thomas had Parthia; that Andrew had Scythia; that John had Asia; that it was *likely* that Peter preached to the Jews dispersed in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, and Cappadocia; and that Paul preached from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum. This account is certainly very far from being satisfactory. He does not even pretend to tell us where they preached, nor even to know the methods which they adopted to settle the various churches which they planted. Bishop Stillingfleet assigns some weighty reasons to induce a belief that their actions, in these respects, were far from being uniform, but that they varied their methods according to the manners and circumstances of the people to whom they preached. What room, then, was there for the triumphant contempt which was poured upon Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, respecting the ordination of the latter by the former, when, according to Eusebius, our only guide, we know scarcely any thing more concerning the travels and manners of the apostles themselves, than we gather from the sacred records.

"But for this deficiency, it may perhaps be expected that the historian will make an ample compensation, when he proceeds to give us an account of their im-

mediate successors and followers. But in this instance also, as well as in many others, disappointment travels in the rear of hope, and even damps our expectation by its shadow. 'Who they were,' says Eusebius, 'that, imitating these apostles, (meaning Peter and Paul,) were by them thought worthy to govern the churches which they planted, is no easy thing to tell, excepting such as may be collected from St. Paul's own words.' [Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iii, c. 4.]

"On this remarkable passage Bishop Stillingfleet makes the following observations:—'If the successors of the apostles, by the confession of Eusebius, are not certainly to be discovered, then what becomes of that unquestionable line of succession of the bishops of several churches, and the large diagrams made of the apostolical churches, with every one's name set down in his order, as if the writer had been *Clarencieux* to the apostles themselves? Are all the great outcries of apostolical tradition, of personal succession, of unquestionable records, resolved at last into the Scripture itself, by him from whom all these long pedigrees are fetched? Then let succession know its place; and learn to veil bonnet to the Scriptures; and, withal, let men take heed of over-reaching themselves, when they would bring down so large a catalogue of single bishops, from the first and purest times of the church, for it will be hard for others to believe them, when Eusebius professeth it is so hard to find them.' [Stillingfleet's Irenic. p. 297.]

"'Would it not,' says Calamy, 'tempt a man to wonder, after all this, to find such a stir made about the tables of succession in the several churches from the time of the apostles, as a proof that diocesan episcopacy had its rise from them? Alas! the head of

the Nile is not more obscure than the first part of these tables.' [Calamy, vol. i, p. 162.]

"'To show,' the same author adds, in another place, 'how little ground there is to depend upon them in the present case, I will give a brief view from the representation of the ancients, of the strange confusion of the first part of the tables of the three most celebrated churches of *Alexandria*, *Antioch*, and *Rome*.

"The church of Alexandria has been generally represented as founded by St. Mark; and yet Eusebius speaks of it but as an uncertain report. 'They say it was so,' but he does not tell us who said so, nor upon what grounds. However, upon this slender authority of '*they say so*,' many others after him have ventured to affirm it as an indisputable fact, that St Mark was actually the founder of this church. However, even in this there is no perfect agreement. Some contend that he was there with St. Peter; others that he was there alone, being sent by St. Peter; others that he was there only once; and others that he returned again after his first visit. As to the time of his arrival, the period of his ministry, and the year in which this church was first founded, all its records are totally silent; and the famous Clement, from whom we might expect some information, throws not a single ray of light upon this subject.

"But even supposing St. Mark, under all these disadvantages, to have been seated in this church, on his throne of polished ivory, as the fabulous legends report, and that he wrote his gospel in it, the difficulties will increase when we proceed to his successors. His immediate follower on 'the throne of ivory' has several names given to him, and as to those who come after, the representations and accounts are too

various and conflicting to be credited as records of a fact.

"The line of succession which proceeds from Antioch is involved in equal, if not still greater difficulties than that of Alexandria. Eusebius, St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, Pope Leo, Innocent, Gelasius, and Gregory the Great, all tell us that this church was founded by St. Peter. But we learn from superior authority, that 'they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution of Stephen, travelled as far as Antioch, preaching the word to the Jews only,' Acts xi, 19. This seems to have been the occasion of introducing Christianity at Antioch. After this, as the converts needed some one to confirm them in the faith which they had newly embraced, the church at Jerusalem sent forth Barnabas, not Peter, that he should go as far as Antioch. And when Barnabas found that he needed some farther assistance, instead of applying to Peter, he 'departed to Tarsus to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch,' Acts xi, 25, 26. In all these transactions we have not one word about Peter; but on the contrary, the intimations appear strongly in favor of Paul, as the first founder of the church in this place.

"We read indeed in another place that St. Peter was at Antioch, but the circumstance is not mentioned to his honor. For St. Paul, observing the offence he had given by his dissimulation, withstood him to the face, which we can hardly suppose he would have done, if Peter had been the founder of the church, and if he now stood at the head of his own diocese.

"Baronius, indeed, aware of these difficulties, is very willing that St. Peter should resign his bishopric at Antioch, upon condition that St. Paul, acting as his vicar, be allowed to have erected one there by his authority. But even this will not do; neither can the supposition be reconciled with the positive declarations of those who assert that he was a long time bishop there.

"If we turn from the apostles to their successors in this church, we shall find ourselves equally destitute of firm footing. Baronius assures us that the apostles left two bishops behind them in this place, one for the Jews, and the other for the Gentiles. These were Ignatius and Euodius. Eusebius says, expressly, that Euodius was the first bishop of Antioch, and that Ignatius succeeded him. But, on the contrary, St. Chrysostom, Theodoret, and the author of the Constitutions declare, with equal assurance, that St. Peter and St. Paul both laid their hands on Ignatius; but, unfortunately, it appears that St. Peter was dead before Ignatius was bishop in this place.

"The settlement of the Church of Rome, and its much extolled apostolical succession of bishops, is involved, if possible, in still greater perplexity, confusion, and disorder. According to some, this church was founded by St. Peter; others say it was by St. Paul; some introduce both; and others assert it was neither. Of this latter opinion were the learned Salmasius and others. But let us allow that St. Peter actually was at Rome, of what advantage will this be to the succession of bishops? If Peter was there, it is equally certain that St. Paul was there also; and under these circumstances it will be hard to determine who was bishop. St. Paul was there first, and on this account

he is preferred by many of the ancients to St. Peter; and in the seal of that church the former is placed on the right hand, and the latter on the left. But still this does not determine who was bishop. To accommodate this business they have agreed to make them both bishops; and this unhappily destroys the unity of the episcopate, by placing two supremes at the same time in the same church.

"But whatever uncertainty may accompany the question as to the first bishop, those who succeeded him are known with even less assurance. On this point the ancients and the moderns are strongly divided. Some will have *Cletus* expunged out of the table, as being the same with *Anacletus;* and thus fixing *Linus* at the head of the succession, cause him to be followed by *Anacletus* and *Clemens.* In this manner Ireneus represents the case. Others will have *Cletus* and *Anacletus* to be both retained as distinct bishops, having *Linus* standing between them. At the same time, in some of the ancient catalogues, *Anacletus* is excluded; and, what is remarkable, he is not to be found at this day in the canons of the mass. And yet, in the Roman Martyrology, both *Cletus* and *Anacletus* are distinctly mentioned, and a different account is given of the birth, pontificate, and martyrdom of each.

"In the catalogue of Epiphanius the early bishops of Rome are placed in the following orders: Peter and Paul, Linus, Cletus, Clemens, and Euaristus. But in the catalogue of Bucher they stand according to the following arrangement: Linus, Cletus, Clemens, and Euaristus; and three names are entirely omitted; namely, Anicetus, Eleutherius, and Zephyrinus. And what shall we do with the famous Clement? Does he style himself bishop of Rome? Or how came he to forget his title?

"It has been said by some that after he had been St. Paul's companion, and was chosen by Peter to be bishop of Rome, he gave place to Linus. But others assert, with equal confidence, and perhaps with equal authority, that Linus and Clemens, and others that Linus and Cletus, were bishops at the same time. Tertullian, Ruffinus, and some others, place Clement next to St. Peter; but Ireneus and Eusebius set Anacletus before him; and Optatus makes both Anacletus and Cletus to precede him. And, finally, as though these strenuous defenders of apostolical succession were destined to render it ridiculous by the various methods they have adopted to defend this tender string, Austin, Damasus, and others, will not allow him to grace the list, until the names of Anacletus, Cletus, and Linus, have appeared. Such is the foundation of apostolical succession in the Church of Rome! Surely it can be no breach of charity to assert that,—

'The bold impostor
Looks not more silly when the cheat's found out.'

"It was not, therefore, without reason that Bishop Stillingfleet observed, 'The succession here is as muddy as the Tiber itself; and if the line fails us here, we have little cause to pin our faith upon it, as to the certainty of any particular form of church government, which can be drawn from the help of the records of the primitive church.' [Irenicum, p. 312.] It cannot, therefore, but be evident to every unprejudiced mind, that, since such confusion and disorder appear in the front of these tables of succession, where we might most naturally expect the greatest regularity and certainty, no dependance can be placed on their authority."

NUMBER XVII.

Origin of the usurpation—That it was such, proved from Mosheim—Its demoralizing effects—Examples of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, of Alexandria and Antioch—Mutual anathemas and excommunications—War and bloodshed—The boasted succession a fable—Hence the validity of ordination cannot depend upon it—Pope Joan—Death to the doctrine of succession—It is worse than a mere fable, and therefore should be repudiated.

It has been affirmed by high Episcopalians that those denominated bishops in the second and third centuries and onward were the immediate successors of the apostles; and that modesty induced them to take this title rather than to keep up the appellation of apostles. But is this the fact? I think not.

We have already seen that the apostles and their immediate successors were itinerating ministers, exercising an extensive jurisdiction over presbyters, deacons, and people; and that they, in common with the presbyters, exercised, according to their discretion, the right of conferring orders upon others. On the increase of the church in number, wealth, and influence, this mode of life was gradually laid aside; and with it the power of jurisdiction was claimed and exercised by the bishops, not from modesty, but from pride—to whom the power of ordination always belonged, and in the manner I have described in the xiii, xiv, and xv numbers, they enlarged their jurisdiction, pleading as a precedent, though improperly, the example of the apostles and itinerating evangelists; and by supplying their own lack of service, after luxury had eaten out their spirituality, with the labors of *rural* or *suffragan* bishops; and, finally, after *popery* had erected its ebon throne in the temple of God, by the agency of *nuncios*, *legates*, &c.

This was the origin of these episcopal claims, and especially the claim of exclusive ordination.

And I have said that the assertion of this exclusive right was a USURPATION which did *not* originally belong to them; that therefore it proved a *curse* to the church; that *God has frowned upon it*, and exercises the awful prerogative of *dashing it to pieces*, whenever it stands in his way of working.

These assertions I shall now attempt to sustain.

1. That it was a *usurpation*, is demonstrated from the testimonies already adduced in support of the proposition that,—

To the presbyters originally belonged the right of consecrating others.

Let our antagonists try their strength here first. If they can disprove this fact by countervailing testimony, more strong and explicit, they will have invalidated one main argument in support of the assertion that the claim of an exclusive right of ordination in a *third* order, made such by a *triple* consecration, was a *daring usurpation*.

While giving them time to hunt up these proofs, I will offer the following as corroborative of this assertion. Mosheim is quoted as authority by Dr. Chapman in support of his theory. And that the bishops *usurped* powers which did not belong to them, after their jurisdiction was enlarged in the manner before described, immediately after the empire became nominally Christian, is proved from the testimony of this accurate historian, in the following language. Speaking of these haughty prelates, Mosheim says:—

"Their first step was an entire *exclusion* of the people from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and, afterward, they by degrees divested

even the *presbyters* of their ancient privileges and their primitive authority, that they might have no importunate protesters to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings, and principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that, at the conclusion of this century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged to the *presbyters* and *people*, were USURPED by the *bishops*." [Cent. iv, part ii.]

Among the ancient privileges of the presbyters thus *usurped* by the bishops, one doubtless was refusing to them the right which they originally possessed, of conferring orders upon others. For although, in many instances, for the sake of peace they voluntarily resigned it to a superior minister, they never supposed that it would be absolutely *claimed* as a *right*, as they afterward found it was, at the expense of many other privileges.

2. That this usurpation proved a *curse* to the church, I will now endeavor to prove.

It must be admitted as beyond all controversy, that this usurpation was founded in pride, that it naturally led to a lordly superiority in the bishops in the exercise of their assumed powers over their brethren. And this lordly disposition began to manifest itself first, and most conspicuously, in the bishop of Rome, who "surpassed," says the historian just quoted, "all his brethren in the magnificence and splendor of the church over which he presided, in the riches of his revenues and possessions, in the number and variety of his ministers, in his credit among the people, and

in his sumptuous and splendid manner of living." Hence, in this century, "Rome became a most seducing object of sacerdotal ambition." "The intrigues and disturbances that prevailed in that city in the year 366, when, upon the death of Liberius, another pontiff was to be chosen in his place, are a sufficient proof of what we have now advanced. Upon this occasion, one faction elected Damasus to that high dignity, while the opposite party chose Uricinus, a *deacon** of the vacant church, to succeed Liberius. This double election gave rise to a dangerous *schism*, and to a sort of civil war within the city of Rome, which was carried on with the utmost barbarity and fury, and produced the most *cruel massacres* and *desolations*."

Here we behold one of the sad effects of this USURPATION. Having nearly annihilated the power and privileges of the presbyters, the bishopric became such an object of ambition that, as early as the year 366, in order to secure it, the imperial city, the very seat of the apostolical succession—the very fountain whence the Protestant Episcopalians trace their impure stream of succession—was polluted with the blood of citizens who were *most cruelly massacred.*

These were some of the first fruits of those *assumed* powers. Do we want any farther proof

* This fact, that a *deacon* was chosen to the office of a *bishop*, is a proof that they did not then consider it essential that there should be a third order in the ministry to secure the validity of consecration; for here was a man chosen from the rank of the deacons to the episcopacy. And though ousted by his rival, we have no account that this circumstance was urged against him.

that the *usurpation* was a *curse* to the church? How would St. Peter, who was commanded to *feed the sheep and lambs*, have wept had he been present to have witnessed the transformation of these professed shepherds of Christ's flock into such *ravening wolves*, becoming, as they did, in order to satiate their ambition, the literal murderers of the people committed to their charge!

Here then, I say again, is the fruit of this *usurped* apostolic succession. Having once thrown off the proper character of Christ's shepherds, as simple presbyters or primitive bishops, they *destroyed* instead of *saved* the souls *for whom Christ died!*

Let Dr. Chapman and his admirers, who pour forth their pious sarcasms upon John Wesley, the founder of Methodist episcopacy, look at those founders of their succession, and then decide who has the greatest reason to blush at the recollection of their patriarchs, or first fathers.

It is unnecessary, I apprehend, to go on to particularize the subsequent acts of mutual jealousy, barbarity, and cruelty which distinguished and disgraced the conduct of the rival bishops from time to time. Let the reader who wishes for particular information of this sort, take up Mosheim, and cast his eye along the famous catalogue of bishops in the chronological tables affixed to his history, and then turn to the pages referred to in the history itself, and he will soon find enough to convince him of the truth of the remark, that this unholy *usurpation* of exclusive power proved a signal *curse* to the church. Let him listen to the mutual recriminations between the lordly prelate of Constantinople, who now began to feel the high importance of his metropolitan dignity, and the

no less haughty pontiff of Rome, who felt himself wounded by the ambitious pretensions of his rival; let him lend his ear to the thundering anathemas of *Cyril*, the imperious bishop of Alexandria, against *Nestorius*, and the no less violent accusations of the latter against his haughty antagonist, exasperating the spirits of each other by reciprocal excommunications, merely because they disagreed concerning the appellation which should be given to the holy virgin; and then behold this same *Cyril*, with the relentlessness of a tiger, pursuing *John*, the less obstinate bishop of Antioch, which took place early in the *fifth* century; and he will have seen and heard enough to make him suspect that these apostolic successors profited but little from their assumed powers, and that the church, instead of deriving a benefit from the *usurpation*—for such I *must* continue to call it in order to give it its right name—groaned under one of its most *tremendous curses*. The people were torn to pieces with endless disputes—the presbyters and other inferior ministers were proportionably corrupted—while pure religion was suffocated with the dense smoke raised by the fury of the rival combatants.

Passing over other minor squabbles for superiority among these lordly *usurpers* over the rights, privileges, and liberties of the people and inferior clergy, let us just glance at that famous division of the church which took place through the haughty rivalry and bitter recriminations between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople. Without detaining the reader with a detailed account of the causes which led to the fatal rupture which took place between these two haughty prelates, I will just remark that *Felix* II., bishop of

Rome, first hurled at *Acasius*, bishop of Constantinople, the bull of excommunication, and that in retaliation, *Acasius* threw his antagonist over the walls of the church. The war thus kindled, continued its ravages with destructive fury, through all ranks of the church, until almost every vestige of pure religion was consumed.

These examples of clerical ambition and ecclesiastical malversation, are quoted not to prove that the ordinations practised in modern episcopal churches are vicious; but to sustain my position that in thus departing from the *original church of Christ*, in establishing this *usurpation*, a heavy curse was inflicted upon the church, and upon the world. What have I to do in judging of the validity of their consecration? It is this *fabled succession*—this *unrighteous usurpation*—so soon becoming a fruitful source of moral and spiritual *pollution*—that I condemn. But if they substitute a secular for a spiritual head, and introduce numberless ceremonies and usages unknown to the primitive church, I have a right to quote these things as evidences of their *departure* in practice from the *original* church of Christ. These things were never referred to by me to invalidate their ordination. My arguments have not been directed against the validity of *their* orders, but in defence of our *own*. And a man who has attentively read my articles and has not perceived this, may deserve pity, but certainly is unworthy of any other feeling, much less of additional argument to enlighten him, for I should as soon expect the *Ethiopian to change the color of his skin*, as to beat an idea into the brains of such a man.

If indeed the validity of ordination *depended* on the

truth of this doctrine of *succession*, then I should say that it is doubtful whether there be a validly constituted ministry in the universe. It must therefore depend upon something else, or we are all swept by the board, and the Christian priesthood has been long since drowned in the depth of the turbulent ocean of doubt and uncertainty.

So far, then, as our antagonists rest the validity of their orders upon *succession*, so far they rest it upon a *sandy foundation;* and of course, if this be their *only* plea in its favor, I will then venture to affirm that it has *no foundation at all.* This I shall attempt more fully to demonstrate in another number.

In the meantime, I will refer to one more historical fact, to show the rottenness of the foundation on which this doctrine of succession rests. In the ninth century, "between the pontificate of Leo IV., who died in 855, and that of Benedict III.," such were the shameful intrigues by which rival candidates contended for the prize of the popedom, that "a certain WOMAN who had art to disguise her sex for a considerable time, is said, by learning, genius, and dexterity, to have made good her way to the papal chair, and to have governed the church with the title and dignity of pontiff for about two years."* I am aware that the truth of this narrative has been called in question. But Mosheim, whom Dr. Chapman quotes in favor of his ecclesiastical genealogy with high approbation, says, that "during the *five* succeeding centuries, it was *generally believed*, and a vast number of writers bore testimony to its truth; nor,

* See Mosheim. Others relate that she was detected by exposing the fruit of her illicit connection in a public procession.

before the reformation undertaken by Luther, was it considered by any, either as incredible in itself, or as ignominious to the church." And if being in such a corrupt succession, and receiving episcopal consecration, constitute a subject a canonical bishop, I see no reason why Pope *Joan* may not be considered as good a pope as any of them.

This indeed must be allowed by Dr. Chapman and his converts, or they must at once and for ever abandon the doctrine of an unbroken succession. Let them take their choice. Either allow that an intriguing prostitute was a canonical bishop, merely because she was artful enough to mount the throne of the popedom, and obtain the blessing of the succession, or acknowledge that this line was snapped asunder by the hands of an artful woman. I think a man who will deliberately place himself on either horn of such a dilemma, exposes himself to the just ridicule of all men of sense, and to the commiseration of all women of piety.

Perhaps they will say that they are not indebted to this impure stream for their rivulet of succession. But hold, gentlemen: *you are.* On your own concession, *you are.* Dr. Chapman has referred his readers to this very table found in Mosheim,* and this traces the line from Rome, through *Pope* JOAN, to the archbishop of Canterbury, from whom Bishop White received his consecration. And there is no other given. There is no succession traced, not even in pretence, from either Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, or Carthage. If ever there were any such tables, true or false, they *are lost—totally and irrecoverably*

* It may be remarked that Mosheim himself introduced this account by saying that this event "is said to have *interrupted* the much-vaunted *succession* in the see of Rome."

lost. Here then is your *only* fountain, your *only* stream; and that this has been abominably polluted, and remains so, contaminated beyond the power of language to describe, by the bloody waters of strife and war, and the muddy streams of moral pollution, is put beyond all dispute.*

And more than all, in the instance referred to, the stream became so turbid, that it actually ceased to flow. So sensible were the Romish successionists of the truth of this, that when Luther commenced his reformation, and, to defend himself against the rude assaults of his adversaries, plunged them headlong into this now turbid and polluted stream; their friends,

* The reader will bear in mind that though the Roman Catholics acknowledge *seven orders*, yet there are but *three* which are considered *sacred*, namely, *deacon*, *priest*, and *bishop*; the other four are petty or *secular*, and are called *doorkeeper*, *exorcist*, *reader*, and *acolyth*. Whenever, therefore, an ecclesiastic is elected a *pope*, he is not considered as being of another *order* in the ministry. Hence he is not *consecrated* in the manner of a bishop, but *crowned* as a king. As to *order*, therefore, he answers to the order of the bishops in the English and Protestant Episcopal Churches, being the first bishop in the Romish Church, with supreme *jurisdictional* powers over the whole Catholic world.

From this it follows that the line of succession must run through the popes, who are considered by the Roman Catholics as the centre of all ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction, and without whose concurrence no ordination is valid. Hence a vacancy in this line, completely breaks the chain of succession, and renders it void.

In the early days of Christianity all the bishops were commonly called Παπα, which signifies simply *father*, by way of honoring them as the first builders of the church; but after the bishop of Rome had usurped the supremacy, he alone was honored with that appellation, to distinguish him from all others, as the *father* of the faithful—the *pope*, by most Protestants as a term of reproach.

in order to extricate them, went to work to open the channel, and to cleanse the fountain. Though *Pope Joan* had lain quietly interred for *five centuries*, as having been an undisputed pontiff, filling the direct line of succession, she was now most inhumanly disinterred, and her identity called in question! This was cruel. But what can the upholders of error do, when so hard pressed by the advocates of truth? *Luther* was *excommunicated*, while *Pope Joan* had been long *canonized!* *John Wesley* was a *schismatic*, while the *she pope* had been recognized as a *connecting link* in the imperishable chain of apostolic *succession!*

Now will any man in his sober senses say, that the validity of his credentials as a minister of Jesus Christ depends upon *such* a succession? That from its having descended to him through *such* a bastardly lineage he is *therefore* legitimately born? Let him say it who wishes. For my part, I cannot help believing that this doctrine of succession is *worse* than a mere "fable." Until I began recently to examine it more thoroughly than I had done heretofore, I had no conception of the rottenness of the foundation on which it rests, nor of the pernicious consequences resulting from placing dependence upon it. It seems indeed like a quagmire, the farther you enter it, the more it shakes and trembles around you, and the more difficult it becomes to extricate yourself from it. Every step you take sinks you deeper and deeper in the mud.

But as I have ventured upon its deceitful surface, for the purpose merely of ascertaining its strength, justice requires that I should survey its length and breadth, and endeavor to sound its depth. In my next,

therefore, I shall attempt an examination of some farther arguments by which its advocates endeavor its support, in connection with the question whether consecration makes a man a minister for life, be his actions what they may.

NUMBER XVIII.

Consequences of the doctrine of succession—Said to be the essential thing—Righteousness will not qualify, nor wickedness disqualify a man who is in the succession—A denial of this breaks the chain—Proved by sundry arguments—The line broken by Pope Joan—By Octavian—By the election of two bishops at the same time—Consecration converted into a sacrament—The line broken to fragments.

In my last I endeavored to show the polluted channel through which this stream of succession has flowed. It would be an easy matter to follow its turbid waters down to the memorable era of the reformation, and to demonstrate that, instead of its becoming purer by age, it continued to accumulate more and more of its impurities, until its stench became so offensive to some men of more refined taste, that they determined no longer to drink of its muddy waters.

Some, however, may be disposed to cavil at the assertion in my former number, that the line of succession has descended to the English Church through the Church of Rome, down through Pope Joan and others, inasmuch as the English archbishops trace their origin to *Augustine* in the 6th century. In reply, I would remark, that Augustine was nominated to his office by Gregory, the bishop of Rome, in 597, and that as the popes are considered the centre of all

ecclesiastical power, without whose concurrence no episcopal ordination is valid, the archbishops of Canterbury must be considered, notwithstanding, as deriving all their authority from Rome, to whose power and jurisdiction they always professed subjection, until the time of the reformation. The pretended succession, therefore, of the English Church, is one of the many rivulets, all of which have flowed from the same fountain, namely, the see of Rome.

Let us therefore examine a little farther into this doctrine of succession. We have already seen on what a sandy foundation it rests. Let us now look at some of the consequences to which it inevitably leads. "The tree is known by its fruits." And when we cannot assert positively, *a priori*, in respect to the truth or falsity of a doctrine, we may reason *a posteriori*, from effects to cause, in order to ascertain its character. In the present instance, however, our position is sustained by both these methods of argumentation. To the latter I will now more particularly address myself.

According to the opinion of those who advocate its claims, it is the *essential thing* to a valid Christian ministry.

Whatever qualifications a man may possess—though he may be as holy and as wise as Wesley, as Cranmer, as Luther, as Calvin, or even St. Paul himself—and as evidently designated of God as his chosen instrument to bear his name to a lost world—unless he were episcopally ordained by a bishop who had received his commission by a *triple* consecration, he is no true minister of Jesus Christ, and of course, if he presume to administer the ordinances, he is an impostor, or intruder into the fold of Christ!

On the other hand, however wicked, ignorant, and abandoned a man is, if he be thus episcopally consecrated, he is a true minister of the sanctuary, the ordinances are validly administered, if administered by him, and the line of succession is kept unbroken!

Do you demur at this monstrosity? You must not. If you do, your line is snapped asunder at once. Look at the line of bishops as handed down to us through the Church of Rome. And let it be remembered that this is the channel through which the stream of succession has flowed into the Protestant Episcopal Church. If you can find a more wicked, ignorant, and base set of human beings, than many of them were—perhaps I might say the *most* of them—then may your cheeks cease to redden at the recollection of depraved human nature—or at that depraved reason of man which would make the validity of the Christian ministry and the Christian ordinances to depend on such a rotten line as this! Now I aver that the sticklers for this unbroken succession must allow, that no act of wickedness, not even adultery and murder, disqualifies a man for a bishop, if he be only ordained by others who were in the succession.

The moment you deny this, the chain of succession is shivered in a thousand pieces! And let him weld it together who can.

It is not fitting that the truth of this declaration should rest on mere assertion. I regret, indeed, that our antagonists compel us to this mode of defence. For be it remembered that I act on the defensive. Whoever has been in the habit of looking over the pages of Protestant Episcopalian writers, from the "Churchman's Magazine," down to "the Churchman," a weekly paper now published in this city, and to Dr.

Chapman's Sermons, will find them rife with flippant caricatures of our ministry and ordinances. Wesley and his coadjutors are branded as schismatics and interlopers—Methodist episcopacy as an unwarrantable assumption of human power—and even now, writers are advancing their unsupported dogmas in favor of the divine origin of diocesan episcopacy, and denouncing others as the spurious offspring of schismatical pride, or as the claim of ignorant fanatics. No man, therefore, who duly considers this subject, will blame us for attempting to defend ourselves against this ceaseless cry, this perpetual ringing the changes, of *succession ! succession !* as though the salvation of the world depended upon the truth and reality of this ecclesiastical dogma.

Let us then see whether, in order to sustain this doctrine, its advocates are not obliged to maintain the position that neither *vice*, of any sort, nor *ignorance*, however ineffable, nor *pride* and *ambition*, however insufferable, disqualifies a man for the office of a bishop, provided he be in the line of succession. In order to this, let us look at the character and lives of some of those apostolic successors.

We have already seen the bloody carnage occasioned by the ambitious strife for the pontificate, between *Felix* and *Damasus* in the 4th century, and also of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople in their struggles for dominion. After such preludes as these, is it any wonder that we listen to the following account of the bishops and clergy, in the beginning of the 9th century :—

"The *impiety* and *licentiousness* of the GREATEST PART of the clergy arose at this time to an *enormous* height, and stand upon record, in the *unanimous* com-

plaints of the most candid and impartial writers of this century. In the east, tumult, discord, conspiracies, and treason, reigned uncontrolled, and all things were carried by *violence* and *force*." "In the western provinces, the *bishops* were become *voluptuous* and *effeminate* to a very high degree. They passed their lives amidst the splendor of courts, and the pleasures of a *luxurious indolence*, which corrupted their taste, extinguished their zeal, and rendered them *incapable of performing the solemn duties of their functions*."

Is this true? Were they indeed *incapable*, in consequence of their "luxurious indolence," their "conspiracies and treasons," and their "licentiousness," of *performing the solemn functions of their office?* What then became of *ordination?* Alas! for the chain of succession, when its links are incrustated with such filth! Did not the rust of pollution quite eat them up at this time? Were those men true ministers of Jesus Christ, merely because they had received the mitre from the hands of others no more pure than themselves? But let us hear this same impartial and accurate historian still farther:—

"Many other causes," says Mosheim, "also contributed to *dishonor* the church, by introducing into it a *corrupt ministry*. A nobleman, who, through want of talents,"—mark this!—"activity, or courage, was rendered *incapable* of appearing with dignity in the cabinet, or with honor in the field, immediately turned his views toward the church, aimed at a distinguished place among its chiefs and rulers, and became, in consequence, a *contagious* example of *stupidity* and *vice* to the inferior clergy."

In consequence of these and other abominations to

which the bishops were addicted, and whose ungodly example the inferior clergy followed with a greedy facility, the same historian tells us, that—

"In 884, the election of the bishops of Rome was carried on without the least regard to law, order, and decency, generally attended with civil tumults and dissensions." And hence it is affirmed that the "*greater part* of the bishops of this century are only known by the *flagitious actions* that have transmitted their names with *infamy* to our times." See Mosh., cent. ix, ch. ii.

Such a state of things might well prepare for that more infamous transaction mentioned in my last number, the election and consecration of Pope JOAN to the bishopric of Rome, which took place in this century. And if the mere act of consecration be all that is necessary to make a human being a canonical bishop, I see not why *she* might not have transmitted this immaculate daughter of the succession as purely and as legitimately as Boniface or Leo!

But query:—Was Joan ordained first a *deacon*, then a *priest*, and thirdly a *bishop?* Or did she mount directly, without ascending the intermediate steps from a simple *layman*—I beg pardon of HER *holiness*—a *lay*WOMAN—to the popedom? As the latter seems the more probable, I think here is a chasm in the line of *triple* consecration, which is not easily filled up. Indeed, the fabulous character of this succession increases upon us most frightfully as we travel down the line, or rather wander in the spectral labyrinth, while searching for this illustrious personage, whose ideal existence perpetually eludes our most eager grasp.

But the crimes of the bishops of Rome in the 9th, are

tolerable in comparison to what they were in the 10th century. *Intrigue*, *rapine*, *murder*, and *licentiousness* in its most revolting forms, distinguished, disgraced, debased, and brutalized their conduct—so much so that Mosheim tells us, that the worst tyrants Rome ever had, did not equal them in their abominations. And if a chasm be not found in the elevation of Joan to the papal chair, I think we shall find one in this century in the person of *Octavian*, son of the emperor Aberic II., whom his father "raised to the pontificate while in the *early bloom* of youth, and destitute beside of every quality that was requisite in order to discharge the duties of that high and important office." Certainly this "blooming youth," a mere private citizen, did not ascend to his high office through the intermediate steps of deacon and priest. Here could have been no triple consecration. Will some of our modern successionists supply this lost link?

Another difficulty, of no less formidable character, presents itself about the middle of the 11th century, when the church had to groan under the misrule of TWO *bishops*, *Sylvester* and *Gregory*, at the same time; the one of whom, *Gregory*, having purchased the papal chair of *Benedict*, who had been *twice deposed* on account of his horrid crimes, and now, while occupying his seat for the *third time*, and perceiving he could hold out no longer against the violent hatred of the people, sold his birthright to *Gratian*, who took the name of *Gregory VI.*, and ruled jointly with *Sylvester*.

From which of these factious bishops will Pro Ecclesia and his associates trace their unbroken line of succession? There were in fact, no less than *three* popes at the same time! For if the doctrine

of succession be true, *once a bishop always a bishop*, the mere circumstance of Benedict's deposition on account of his horrid crimes, or the fact of his *selling the mitre to Gregory*, does not deprive him of his bishopric. Will some one of the advocates of succession tell us from which of these successors of the apostles they have derived their exclusive authority to make bishops, priests, and deacons?

But it is needless to multiply examples, as the profligacy, venality, and unbounded ambition of the bishops of Rome would exceed all belief, did not the page of history give us the most authentic accounts of their acts and proceedings.

Now what does the doctrine of succession teach? Why, it teaches that all these men were truly and canonically bishops. Does not every body see therefore that their canonicalness depends *entirely* and *exclusively* upon the act of consecration? The moment it is contended that gifts, grace, or any other moral or spiritual qualification is necessary, succession is given up. But the consequence does not stop here.

According to this doctrine consecration is exalted to a *sacrament*. It is well known that the Roman Catholic Church holds to *seven* sacraments, among which is that of *ordination*. The Protestants have discarded *five* of these, namely, *confirmation*, *penance*, *extreme unction*, *marriage*, and *ordination*, retaining only two, *baptism*, and the *Lord's supper*. Now what is the meaning of a sacrament? We know that the word is derived from the Latin *sacramentum*, which signifies the oath taken by the Roman soldiers to be true to their country. But as good a definition as can be given of this word, when used in a religious sense, is the following, which is that of the Church of Eng-

land, and is adopted by the Protestant Episcopal Church in her catechism :—

"It is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

This then constitutes a *sacrament ;* and though the Protestant Episcopalians have in form repudiated *ordination* from the list of their sacraments, yet the doctrine of succession, as held and taught by them, does most effectually convert it into a sacrament. Let us see if this be not so.

Here are persons *famous only for their flagitious acts of wickedness*, whose *stupidity* and *luxurious indolence* were such as to render them incapable of serving the state while they remained mere laymen, who are no sooner elected and consecrated, than they are converted into canonical bishops ; all their official acts are valid, and they are competent to transmit the line of pontifical succession, in all its spirituality, unimpaired, unpolluted, and perfectly sound in all its parts, to future generations. Now what converted these monsters in human shape into apostolical bishops ? I answer,

THE ACT OF CONSECRATION ALONE !

They had nothing else to make them competent—except it were their brutal *stupidity*, *ignorance*, and *wickedness !* And yet, such is the magic influence of the oil of consecration, that these men are instantly metamorphosed into *saints !* into legitimate successors of the apostles ! Is not therefore consecration a *sacrament ?* Is it not the *one thing needful ?* It is not only an outward and visible *sign*, but the thing *signified* thereby—apostolic power—is most assuredly and infallibly communicated—and so communicated

too that it *cannot be lost*, though the incumbent should wallow in all the filth of iniquity all the days of his life!

Yet more :—This doctrine takes up a single *layman* (or perchance a *lay*WOMAN) *famous* only for his *stupidity*, *ignorance*, and *profanity*, and claps the mitre upon his head at once, without waiting for the slow process of intermediate ordinations, and thus makes him an apostolic successor! Can any other sacrament work such miracles?

Now let those who can swallow this inexpressible monstrosity, tell us what else can perform such a wonder. Behold! ye advocates of succession, your chain shivered to pieces—or admit the doctrine, that the simple act of consecration, though it be administered by an illegitimate, himself the offspring of an illicit connection between a pope and his adulteress,* changes the *lion* into a *lamb*, and makes him truly a depositary of canonical ordination! Here is your line of succession! Here is your divine right of episcopacy! Here is the justification of your exclusive claims! or, rather, the refutation of all your arguments in their defence!

* In the 10th century, after many bloody struggles respecting who should fill the papal chair, and after one *wanton pope* had been put to death in prison to satisfy the vengeance of the daughter whose mother he had seduced, *Marozia*, the wife of the marquis of Tuscany, a powerful prince, seized the opportunity to raise John XI., who was the fruit of her lawless amors with one of the pretended successors of St. Peter, to the papal dignity. This pretended successor of St. Peter was Sergius III., "whose adulterous commerce," says the historian, "with that infamous woman gave an *infallible* guide to the Romish Church." Mosheim, cent. x, part ii.

Such facts need no comment. They speak volumes against placing any dependence upon this fabled succession.

The reader will pardon these exclamation points. I know not how otherwise to express my astonishment, that any man, in his sober senses, should place dependence upon such a rotten foundation—that he should persist in tracing his origin to such impure sources.

If this monstrous doctrine does not transform *ordination* into a *sacrament*, to all intents and purposes, I confess I know not what should be called a sacrament. In this particular, therefore, they must go back to "mother church," revise their article of faith on the sacraments of Christianity, and adopt this of ordination as one of them.

Do any object to these arguments, and say that a man must not only be in the line of succession in order to be a legitimate bishop, but must also be a good, holy, and talented man? Allow this, and your chain, as I have before said, is broken into a thousand fragments. There is therefore no medium between allowing that no sort or color of wickedness disqualifies a man for a true spiritual shepherd of Christ's flock, and surrendering the doctrine of succession as a spectre, which has been conjured up by some ghostly fathers of the church, for the purpose of frightening "weak and unstable souls."

I have more yet to say—more absurd consequences to deduce from this baseless hypothesis, which I must reserve to another number.

NUMBER XIX.

Other consequences deducible from this doctrine—Makes a man inviolable in his official character—Resorted to at the Reformation—Disputed by the Puritans—What consecration does for a man—Imparts no qualification, but simply gives a sanction to his character, and imparts authority to exercise those gifts he already possesses—Confirmed by the practice of all denominations—A full statement of the case—Exemplified from analogy—Contrary doctrine absurd—The persons which confer authority can take it away—Proved from the example of Judas—Opposite doctrine sanctions licentiousness—Fearful results of the doctrine to the cause of successionists.

It has been shown in the last number that the doctrine of succession converts a monster in human shape into a canonical bishop, and therefore transmutes the rite of consecration into a sacrament—such a sacrament as invariably and uniformly conveys to the incumbent the *divine right of episcopacy*. If these deductions are legitimate, as I cannot but think they are, then it follows that a man, once inducted into office in this way, becomes so sacred that no arm can touch him with impunity, no vice, however flagitious, can contaminate his official character, nor any power ever deprive him of his rights, as the visible representative of Christ on earth. This is a corollary which inevitably follows from the doctrine of succession.

But is this a true doctrine? I mean, is it true that because a man has once been inducted into office canonically, he is therefore a "priest for ever, after the order" of the true successors of Jesus Christ? Has he thence become inviolable in his official character? Can you believe this? Do you not see what a broad license such a monstrous doctrine gives to wickedness of every sort? For a man to adopt

this dogma, and then to declaim against the doctrine of indulgences, as promulgated by Leo X., is to stigmatize Luther and all his coadjutors and successors in the glorious work of the Reformation as a set of deluded fanatics, who labored against a pious work of the holy mother church. Those who purchased these indulgences had, nevertheless, to make confession and to do penance, in order to be forgiven; but this holy race of bishops, let their crimes have been whatever they might, or become whatever they may, are exempted from all punishment, free from all censure, immaculate in their official dignity, and can never be deposed, because the oil of consecration has made them the inviolable vicars of Jesus Christ!

The truth of this doctrine, which makes one almost shudder to think upon, deserves examination. It certainly was not the doctrine of the Romish Church before the Reformation; for we have numerous instances upon record where bishops were deposed, and others substituted in their place. It seems, therefore, to have been resorted to by some of the English prelates, especially to refute the calumny, as they considered it, heaped upon them by the Church of Rome, that, being excommunicated by the pope for rebellion and contumacy, they were no longer bishops, and of consequence all their official acts were null and void. To repel this assault upon their official character, they set up the claim that having been once invested with ecclesiastical authority, they could never be divested of it. The doctrine of succession drove them to this absurd conclusion. Taking it for granted that they could have no valid authority as bishops, but by deriving it by regular descent through the line of succession; unless they could make good their creden-

tials on this principle, they concluded that the fabric they were erecting on the ruins of the papal hierarchy must necessarily fall to the ground. Hence this plea, "*Once a bishop, always a bishop.*"

It seems, however, that this point was powerfully debated even among themselves. For while a portion of the English prelates contended for this doctrine, others of them repelled the assaults of their adversaries by resorting to the very arguments we now use to justify ourselves against the objections of high churchmen. These were the *Puritans*, and those especially who borrowed their ideas of church order and government from Calvin and other continental reformers,—concerning whose opinions on this subject, as they have not, as I think, been fairly represented by Dr. Chapman, I shall show my views in a future number.

Let us look at this doctrine for a few moments, in the light of Scripture and common sense. And that we may see it fairly, let us inquire, in the first place, what ordination *is*—what it *does* for a man. According to the doctrine of succession it is the *sine qua non*, the very thing requisite to constitute a man a minister of Jesus Christ. But the monstrous absurdities which flow from this opinion are sufficient of themselves, one would think, to set it aside among all impartial inquirers after truth.

Consecration, it appears to me, is so far from imparting the qualifications of a minister, that it necessarily *presupposes* these qualifications, in the subject on whom the ceremony is performed. It strikes me most forcibly, that whatever may be the theory of some men on this subject, the *practice* of all denominations, with respect to the method adopted in

receiving ministers at the altar, is founded on the presumption that certain qualifications are essential *before* consecration, to make a man a true minister of Jesus Christ; and on the supposition that these qualifications are wanting—suppose the candidate has deceived his examiners and ordainers, by imposing upon their goodness or credulity, his ordination would be thereby rendered null and void.* I say the *practice* of the several denominations seems to confirm this view—and yet it is certain that the doctrine of succession contradicts it.

What is the *practice* to which allusion is made? Do they not all *examine* the candidate in respect to his call, his qualifications, &c.? Of what is this ex-

* In a *legal* point of view—understanding the word legal in a civil sense—whatever is done by a minister acknowledged such by the religious community to which he belongs, is considered valid. In our country, especially, where the constitution and laws have nothing more to do with religious institutions than simply to protect each denomination in its rights and privileges, whoever is recognized as a minister by the community from which he receives his authority to preach and administer the sacraments, the law acknowledges and sanctions, as valid, whatever the minister performs by virtue of his office. Hence marriages and baptisms, duly performed by a minister recognized as such by the denomination to which he belongs, and registered as the law directs, are considered valid, and the certificates and registers are received as competent testimony in the case.

But in those countries which require all ecclesiastical officers to be created as the civil law directs, the minister himself must of course be inducted into office in conformity to the civil regulations, in order to render his official acts valid. Until within a few years, some of the states of America declared marriages by certain ministers not recognized as such by their civil code, invalid. Thank God a better state of things now prevails throughout all our borders.

amination predicated? Is it not that the candidate must possess certain qualifications, and even be "moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him that office," *before* he can be admitted to holy orders? Most certainly all this is implied. Nay, this inward call by the Holy Ghost, and certain mental and spiritual qualifications, are considered as *essential* prerequisites—so *essential* that if the person presenting himself as a candidate for the Christian ministry be judged destitute of them, his application is rejected. The whole procedure, therefore, of examination and ordination, is predicated of the supposition that the person applying for holy orders has been already called of God to take upon him that office, and that he how possesses the requisite qualifications. If you were to examine the formularies of the Protestant Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, or the Methodists, or even the Roman Catholics, you would find them all recognizing this principle in their interrogatories to the candidate, as well as in the forms of consecration: —"Do you think you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" is the substance of what is asked by them all, after the candidate has satisfied them in his previous examination that he possesses the requisite qualifications.

What, then, it must be asked, does consecration do for the person thus called and qualified? Does it impart any new gift? The words of consecration used in setting apart an elder, are as follows:—"The Lord pour upon thee the Holy Ghost for the office and work of an elder in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands." That which is professed to be *committed* unto the person thus consecrated, is the *office and work of an elder in the church of God*, to which he had, as was

believed by all concerned in this solemn transaction, been already called, and for which he is supposed to be fully qualified; and the prayer is, that the *Lord may pour upon him the Holy Ghost*, to fit him more perfectly for and to sustain him in his holy work. Here, therefore, is no new gift imparted, except so far as he is, by this public recognition of his character and official sanction of his professed call to the work of an elder in the church of God, authorized to exercise his gifts in that branch of the church of Christ. The prayer of consecration for a bishop is somewhat different. "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands"—but it amounts to about the same in substance; for in neither is it supposed that the *imposition of hands* confers any new powers, but simply affirms that the candidate hereby receives authority to exercise his office in that peculiar way indicated in the ordination service, and contained in his credentials. In both cases the Holy Ghost is invoked as essential for the due performance "of the office and work" whereunto they are called, and to which they have been thus solemnly consecrated. The grand question therefore still remains to be answered,—

What does the act of consecration do for the man on whom it is performed?

The only answer which seems any way satisfactory is, *that the act of consecration imparts authority to the incumbent to exercise those gifts which it is taken for granted he already possesses, in that particular branch of the church of Christ in which he thinks himself called to labor as a gospel minister.*

A man may be qualified to labor in any depart-

ment of usefulness, as a mechanic, as a lawyer, or as a physician; but this does not entitle him to employ himself in any particular place, until he is authorized so to do by those to whom the place belongs, or over which they have control. So a man thinks himself called of God to preach the gospel. He examines the various modifications of Christianity as held and exemplified by the several denominations of Christians, and their methods of propagating them. Having made up his mind in regard to the truth and expediency of these, he presents himself to the denomination with which he thinks he can the most cordially unite. Here the proper officers of the church examine him in respect to his faith, experience of divine things, his knowledge and other qualifications; and if he give satisfactory evidence of his attainments in these things, he is accepted and consecrated; and by this solemn act he receives an authority he had not before to exercise his gifts to the edification of the church. This is an official recognition of him as a fellow-laborer in the vineyard of the Lord, and a sanction of his official relation to the church. By this procedure "the gift" is imparted to him "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," by which he is authorized to exercise himself as an accredited minister of Jesus Christ in that particular branch of the church, so long as he conforms to its ministerial requisitions, and no longer.

Now, it will be perceived that in all this there is a condition implied, if not indeed formally expressed, on the fulfilment of which he is permitted to exercise his powers in the Christian ministry; and that a failure on his part to fulfil this condition works a forfeiture of his privilege to perform the functions of a minister

of Jesus Christ in that community. He entered upon his work on the supposition of certain qualifications, and on the promise of performing certain duties peculiar to his station as an ambassador of Christ. It was in reliance on his sincerity, and anticipation of his fidelity in his work, that he was admitted to the holy order of the Christian ministry. Supposing, therefore, that he fail to perform these duties—that he apostatize from the faith and purity of the gospel—does he not thereby forfeit his privileges, and deprive himself of the immunities of his office? It appears to me that nothing is more plain and undeniable. And yet the doctrine of succession denies both these positions, by investing a man with a sort of inviolability of official character.

It says, in the first place, let the character of the candidate for office be whatever it may, though he were as wicked as Cain, if he succeed in obtaining the oil of consecration, he is *bona fide* a bishop; and though, secondly, he might have been sincere on his entrance upon his office, and afterward became as open and as flagrant an apostate as Judas, he is a bishop still—and all his official acts are valid. I say the doctrine of uninterrupted succession drives its abettors to this absurd conclusion. The moment they admit that certain moral and spiritual qualifications are essential to a competency for the sacred office, they are sharp sighted enough to see that they nullify, officially annihilate the greater portion of those apostolic successors who occupied the chair of St. Peter from the middle of the fourth century to the present time; for these were entirely destitute of those qualifications which St. Paul described as essential to a bishop, and which are formally demanded,

ex animo, by every orthodox church under heaven. Thus does this fatal doctrine sweep from the church every barrier against the overflowings of ungodliness, and every guard which the piety and wisdom of the men of God have placed around the sanctuary of holiness to preserve its purity.

Allowing that the views here expressed are just, it will follow that the power which conferred orders upon a candidate, has authority to take them away whenever it has good reason to believe the incumbent has forfeited them by malconduct. And the parable of the talents furnishes an argument from analogy in favor of this conclusion. The slothful servant who neglected to improve his talent, lost not only what he might have gained by diligence, but the original talent itself. But we have an incontrovertible evidence in favor of this view of the subject in the case of Judas Iscariot. "He was," says the apostle Peter, "numbered with us, and had obtained a part of this ministry;" and in the solemn invocation to God for direction in selecting a suitable person to fill his place, the same inspired apostle saith, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by TRANSGRESSION FELL," Acts i, 17, 25. Here then is proof indisputable, that even the apostolic office may be forfeited by transgression. And this must set the question at rest with all those who have any veneration for Scripture authority. And that this is a right view of the subject is manifest from the practice of the church for many centuries, as I might easily show, were it necessary, by citing par-

ticular examples, and also from the practice now prevalent among the purest churches in Christendom, who, from respect for their own character, as well as a veneration for Scripture authority, act upon this principle. What! shall a church be compelled to retain a Judas within her bosom! But the subject is so plain, as it appears to me, that none but he who is hard pressed for argument to defend an hypothesis, will attempt to controvert it. On this most obvious principle, I found the following argument:—

A doctrine which sanctions licentiousness in the ministry of Jesus Christ cannot be true:—

But the doctrine of the succession does this: therefore it is not true.

The minor proposition, which alone is susceptible of controversy, is sustained by all those examples I have cited respecting the licentiousness of the bishops of Rome—all of whom this succession sanctions as canonical bishops, and thereby stamps itself with the indelible impression of licentiousness. It in fact furnishes an apology for all those libidinous actions which disgraced the priesthood in the darker ages of the church, as well as those *simoniacal* proceedings which were sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, even before the days of *Hildebrand* or *Gregory VII.*, in the 11th century. And so closely interwoven into the entire web of the church were these vicious practices, that even this high-handed pontiff, who affected and actually attempted to bind kings and emperors fast to the throne of the popedom as tributary vassals, could not separate them without tearing the priestly robes into fragments. Will any man now plead that these men were the legitimate successors of the apostles, and that through their

desecrated hands the episcopal mitre has been transmitted, from one to another, immaculate and uncorrupt?

There is yet a more fearful consequence flowing from the doctrine, that the power which confers orders may take them away. It is well known that at the Reformation all those who protested against the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and thereby obtained the name of Protestants, were excommunicated from that church. What then became of the authority which they had received? Had their ecclesiastical superiors, or had they not, power to pronounce the sentence of excommunication? To say that they had, is to allow that whatever authority they derived from the papal hierarchy was taken from them. Now what authority was that? Not to preach, and pray, and to do good in this way to the souls of men. The principle we have recognized supposes them, allowing them to have been good men, to have had this authority before. But it was an authority to baptize, to administer the Lord's supper, and, if they were bishops, with the concurrence of the pope as *episcopus primo*, or chief bishop, to consecrate others. This then was the authority taken from them by their excommunication. And this was the very thing which the pope of Rome claimed the right and the power to do, as well as to consign them over to "Satan for the destruction of the flesh."

But to say that the bishop of Rome had not power to pronounce the sentence of excommunication, is exactly identical with asserting the doctrine, already shown to be founded in error, of the inviolability of the episcopal character. To adopt this dogma would involve the consequence, that though a man in the sacred garb should turn an open infidel, should

blaspheme Jesus Christ, and proclaim an irreconcilable war upon the entire system of Christianity, he must nevertheless be kept within the fold, and treated as an immaculate shepherd. Does such absurd doctrine need any farther refutation? "Wo worth the day" that should call for it.

It remains, therefore, an indisputable truth, that those who *in*vest another with ecclesiastical orders on condition that he possesses certain qualifications and continues to discharge the duties of his office—all which is most manifestly implied in the examination and professions of candidates for the ministry—have a power and a right to *di*vest him of it whenever he fails to fulfil these conditions. Or if it should appear that the candidate had deceived his examiners and ordainers, this very deception, as it appears to me, would, when detected, nullify all that had been done for him, and totally disqualify him for the work of the ministry.

Now, those Roman Catholic bishops who took upon them that high office in the Romish Church, bound themselves by a *solemn vow* that they would adhere to all the peculiarities of the Romish Church. They professed their faith in the *seven sacraments*, the *seven orders*, *three* sacred and *four* secular, in the supremacy of the pope, the infallibility of the church, the celibacy of the priesthood, and, in a word, in all those things by which that church was and is distinguished. And it was on condition of their engaging to adhere to all these things, to teach and enforce them, that they received consecration as bishops. The question therefore is,—

Whether, when these bishops protested against these things, and set themselves to work to pull them down,

they did not violate their ordination vows, and thereby forfeit the privilege of exercising the functions of their office? And if they did, whether the pope had not the right to depose them, and to strip them of their official character? Will any man dispute this? Common sense would condemn him for the attempt.

Well, this being done, as it certainly was, were these men any longer bishops in consequence of their having received consecration from Rome? Did not the act of deposition deprive them of all that official character, and divest them of all that power which they inherited as the sons of the Romish Church? Can any thing be more undeniable? The same power which had raised them to their official dignity, on condition of their belief in certain dogmas, and their promise to adhere to and defend them, now that they failed to fulfil this condition, and even protested against those things which they had once professed to believe and promised to teach, had a right to degrade them from their rank as bishops, and to withdraw from them all the power with which they had been invested. They were no *Roman Catholic* bishops, and therefore had no right to officiate *as such.* Whether they were ministers of Jesus Christ is another question.

Let us, in order to make this plain to every reader, suppose a parallel case. Suppose then that a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church should enter his protest against episcopacy, against the sacraments of the Lord's supper and baptism, and all those peculiarities by which that church is distinguished from other denominations—would he be tolerated? Would not that church depose him? They certainly would. Well; suppose that they had a canon which recognized

this bishop as the supreme ruler in their church—from whom all episcopal acts, such as consecration, must emanate, would not his deposition make a chasm in their line of succession? It certainly would. But many such depositions happened in the Romish Church. Letting this, however, pass, suppose he were only an ordinary bishop, would not his deposition deprive him of his official character, and render all his subsequent acts, as a bishop, entirely null and void? This, I apprehend, will not be disputed. And will not the same apply to those reforming bishops who rose against the Romish hierarchy, and protested so solemnly against its unscriptural dogmas? This, indeed, was felt at the time, and they provided against its consequences in two ways :—

1. By setting up this claim of perpetual priesthood, founded on the unbroken line of succession, and the inviolability of the episcopal character. These were the high churchmen against whom Stillingfleet, Lord King, and a host of others protested.

2. By pleading that succession is a rope of sand, and that those otherwise called of God and qualified by learning, spiritual gifts, and holiness, might, in a case of necessity, establish such a form of government as they pleased, if they only kept within the Scripture warrant, and provide for the stated ordinances, independently of such a succession as that for which their adversaries contended. These latter comprehended some of the most learned, holy, and devoted men of the nation, and were thence denominated *Puritans*.

But to the point in hand--allowing that the power which *in*vests, can *di*vest, as I think I have proved, then were the Protestant bishops, by the bull of ex-

communication, stripped of their official character, and entirely deprived of whatever authority they had derived from the Church of Rome.

Here then, so far as the English Church is concerned, the chain of succession is again snapped asunder. The connection between them and the Romish Church was, by means of the act of excommunication, severed at once and for ever. For what, then, is their succession good? For just nothing. It is totally destroyed—irrecoverably lost—and hence those who depend upon *it alone* for the validity of their orders, depend upon a floating idea that has no archetype in truth.

Pro Ecclesia, therefore, *et id genus omne*, (*and his whole tribe,*) must seek for some other foundation on which to rest the validity of their ordination, or they must sink to rise no more. They must, I should judge, revive the arguments of the reformers, when pressed by those against whom they had protested, and plead that they had authority from God, independently of human power, to fulfil their high commission as His ambassadors to a lost world.

NUMBER XX.

Dr. Chapman mistakes the doctrine of the reformers—Examination of Calvin's opinion—Of Beza's, Luther's, Melancthon's, Whitgift's, and others—King James—Forms of government established by Calvin and Luther contradict the conclusions of Dr. Chapman—Opinions of these and other writers sustain the doctrine that episcopacy is *allowable* though not *essential.*

AGAINST the arguments adduced in the former number, Dr. Chapman stands ready to enter his protest. In his zeal to support diocesan episcopacy, the

divine right of bishops, and the line of episcopal succession in a third order by a triple consecration, he introduces John Calvin, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Theodore Beza, and Martin Bucer, as having sanctioned his doctrine by the weight of their authority. As I promised to examine his quotations from these eminent men, who first lifted up their voices against the corruptions of Rome, and attempted to cleanse the Augean stable from its offensive defilements, this seems the fittest time to redeem my pledge. It is indeed most unfortunate for Dr. Chapman, that he should attempt his justification by such testimonies, and to prop up his cause by such slender supporters.

That any man should make an effort to persuade his readers that the very men who lent the weight of their influence to establish a *presbyterian* government, should at the same time assert that an *episcopal* government by a *third order* in the ministry is *essential* to the very existence of a true church, is one of those moral problems, which can be solved only by supposing the influence of that prejudice which blinds the understanding of even good men to the light of truth. How preposterous! To suppose that these intrepid reformers exerted themselves to establish a church on a foundation which they themselves declared to be rotten—unscriptural—contrary to apostolic practice! A man who can bring himself to believe this incredible paradox, may believe that the antipodes walk upon their heads, merely because they occupy an opposite side of the globe to ourselves. What! Calvin, Luther, and Melancthon, proclaim themselves such finished hypocrites as to exert all their great talents in founding churches upon Presbyterian prin-

ciples, at the same time that they believed such principles false—that the churches thus founded could have no valid ordinances, because their ministers were interlopers, possessing no ecclesiastical powers! The man who can palm off upon a people such declarations as truth, must calculate largely upon the ignorance and credulity of the people to whom he speaks. Indeed the author I am examining seems to write as though he alone possessed the documents relating to these subjects, and therefore no one can have even a pretence for calling in question the justness of his conclusions. Though he was doubtless perfectly sincere in his professions, yet he attracts notice principally by the boldness of his affirmations—such is the influence of a strong attachment to a preconceived theory. How else can we account for the fact of his quoting from these authors, who say not one word in favor of either the divine right of diocesan episcopacy or of uninterrupted succession, to support his exclusive right of ordination in a third order?

Let us, however, examine those quotations Dr. Chapman has made with a view to support his *hypothesis*—for such it should be called until something more apposite is brought in its support—an ideal thing as far from the minds of Luther and Calvin as the pope's supremacy was from the heart and soul of St. Peter. Indeed the Catholic priests have a more plausible pretence for making St. Peter the foundation of their church, from the words of our Saviour to him, when he said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," than Dr. Chapman has for supposing that Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and Beza, intended to give countenance to the doctrine of episcopal succession, as now taught by high-toned Episcopalians.

But to sustain himself in his declaration, he gives his readers the following quotation from Calvin :—

"If they would give us such a hierarchy, in which the bishops have such a pre-eminence as that they do not refuse to be subject to Christ, and to depend upon him as their only head, and refer all to him; then I will confess, that they are worthy of all anathema, if any such shall be found, who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience." Now is there one word here in favor of diocesan episcopacy? *Not one.* Is there a single declaration here implying Calvin's belief that a *third order*, called bishops, was a *divine right*, and *essential* to the existence of a valid ministry, and a true church? *Not one.*

The true state of the case is, Calvin, whose judgment in ecclesiastical matters was consulted by the reformers in England, gave it as his opinion, that episcopacy, not being contrary to Scripture, might be lawfully retained as a matter of expediency; and at the same time affirms, by way of satisfying the scruples of those who had doubts respecting it, that if they of Geneva could have bishops of such a moderate character that their pride would not prompt them to such a lordly pre-eminence as to lead them to usurp an unchristian authority over their brethren, he would most gladly receive them. But he never dreamed of asserting the essentiality of such an order —much less that it was so divinely established that there could be no valid ministry and ordinances without it. Who beside a zealous successionist would ever think of imputing to John Calvin the absurd conduct of proclaiming the rottenness of the very foundation which his own hands had laid? Of denying

the validity of those very orders which he himself conferred? If there were a sentence in his writings which could, by a tortuous interpretation, be made to speak such a language, both charity and justice would require a different construction; for a man's actions, if he be sincere and without restraint, are the truest interpretation of his language. Beside, Calvin might have approved of episcopacy as established in England, *for* England, as being suited to the state of things in that counrty, without wishing it established in Geneva, where a different state of civil polity prevailed. This quotation, therefore, is so far from proving that Calvin believed in the divine right of episcopacy, and in the uninterrupted succession of a third order by a triple consecration, that it proves, in connection with Calvin's practical comment upon his own words, directly the reverse, and fully sustains our position, that though episcopacy be not commanded in Scripture, nor forbidden, therefore it may be adopted as a matter of expediency, without infracting any law of Christ's kingdom. Thanks to Dr. Chapman for reminding us of this respectable authority in justification of our proceedings. Calvin's opinion was, that episcopacy, though not essential, yet if it can be had of such a character as shall not contravene the laws of Christ, may be received with suitable reverence; so say we, and act accordingly.

The quotation from Beza amounts to the same thing, and no more. He says, "In my writings touching church government, I ever impugned the Romish hierarchy, but never intended to touch or impugn the ecclesiastical polity of the Church of England. If there are any who reject the whole order of episcopacy, God forbid that any man of a sound

mind should assent to the madness of such men." What does he mean by the *whole* order of episcopacy ?" It would seem from this phraseology, that there was some part of the "order of episcopacy," which he would allow men to reject. The preceding part of the quotation tells us what he meant, namely, as it was established in England—this he never meant to touch—that is, he never meant to interfere with the ecclesiastical economy of a church foreign to his own —but while he claimed the right of modelling his own church according to his views of propriety, on the Presbyterian plan, he was willing others should enjoy the same privilege unmolestedly. A most demonstrative proof this, that he did not consider any one particular form of church government of divine right; for if he had, and if that were diocesan episcopacy, he acted very inconsistently in adhering to Presbyterian parity. Did the liberality of sentiment, in reference to this subject, which distinguished those great men, equally characterize our modern high churchmen, the necessity of this discussion had never existed. While Beza was satisfied with his own form of government, he was willing that others should enjoy the same liberty. This quotation therefore makes for us. It establishes the position I have all along maintained, that an episcopal form of church government, or the contrary, resolves itself into the considerations of expediency, and not of immutable right. We shall be thankful to Dr. Chapman for many more such authorities in favor of our thesis, and against his own hypothesis.

Luther and Melancthon are also quoted by this same author in support of his doctrine of succession and divine right of bishops of a third order in the ministry

—whereas he might with equal justice and propriety have quoted them in proof of the infallibility of the pope, to which they once so firmly adhered. What does Luther say? He says, "We would acknowledge them," the Romish bishops, "as our fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which we find supported by the word of God." That is, "It is supported by the word of God," that we should "obey them that have the rule over us." This Luther would most gladly have done, could he be convinced that their requisitions were according to Scripture; but as he was thoroughly convinced that the pope and his adherents required unscriptural things at his hands, notwithstanding his desire to obey them, he abjured their authority, and treated their assumptions with indignant contempt. Can any man persuade himself to believe that Luther meant to say that the word of God required of him an obedience to those very bishops whose authority he condemned, whose unscriptural dogmas he refuted, and whose pride and pomposity his very soul abhorred? It is true he lamented the necessity of these things. Could he have done it with a good conscience, he would most gladly have adhered to the Church of Rome; for nothing was farther from his thoughts at first, than an abjuration of the pope's supremacy; he was driven, from the power of truth and the force of circumstances, to do as he did, and not from a deliberate choice previously made with a view merely to overthrow the power of the Romish hierarchy.

But after his eyes were thoroughly opened to see the depth of the iniquity which lay concealed beneath the rubbish of the Romish superstitions, he proclaimed an irreconcilable war upon the pope and all his

adherents; denounced the papal hierarchy as the head of antichrist; poured forth a torrent of indignant eloquence against the iniquitous practices of priestly indulgences; and while and after he committed the pope's bull of excommunication to the flames on the plains of Wittemberg, he hurled his anathemas at this assumed head of the church, with all the fearlessness and intrepidity of an independent minister of Jesus Christ, who is conscious of the power and majesty of that truth by which his soul is inspired. And is this the man to bow and crouch to those very men whom he thus denounced! A most unfortunate interpretation this, to prop up the tottering cause of episcopal succession! Luther would as soon have acknowledged the see of Rome to be the pure fountain of truth, as he would have exhorted his followers to bow submissively to the lordly dictates of its popes and cardinals, or have asserted his belief in the divinity of their origin, after his understanding was thoroughly enlightened to behold the abominations of popery. Luther's testimony, therefore, does no service to the cause of the successionists.

Melancthon, also, expresses himself to the same effect. His words are, "I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops. For I see what manner of church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that hereafter will grow up a greater tyranny in the church than there ever was before. By what right or law may we dissolve the ecclesiastical polity, if the bishops will grant to us that which in reason they ought to grant. And if it were lawful for us to do so, yet surely it is not expedient. Luther was ever of this opinion."

Now it is most evident that both Luther and

Melancthon place their desire of retaining bishops in the church on the ground of *expediency*, and not on *divine right*. The latter, in the above quotation, admits that it may be *lawful* to dissolve that "ecclesiastical polity" which recognizes episcopacy, but doubts its *expediency* for fear of its bringing into the church *tyranny*. Will any man say that it is *lawful* to *dissolve* that which God has established and made of perpetual obligation? That this is their meaning, is manifest from their actions. If they had considered episcopacy *essential* to the existence of a Christian church, would they have established one without it? Much less did they believe in the necessity of an uninterrupted succession of a third order by a triple consecration, else would they, as simple presbyters, never have proceeded to ordain ministers themselves, and to organize a church under the government of presbyters, as they unquestionably did. The same absurdity as would have been attributable to Calvin on the supposition of his belief in the essentiality of the divine right of episcopacy, and the unbroken line of succession, would appear in the conduct of Luther, on the groundless presumption that he believed in that doctrine. While they admitted that episcopacy was desirable, provided they could procure one of a primitive character, they knew, and acted accordingly, that the validity of the Christian ministry and ordinances did not depend upon such an episcopacy, but upon something more substantial. They left, therefore, bigots to dispute about these things, while they proceeded to organize a church without calling to their aid a third order made so by a triple consecration. How perfectly absurd to suppose that they would have done this with the fact staring them in the face,

that such an order, so created, was essential to the very existence of a Christian church.

The opinions of these men on the continent were in accordance with many of the reforming bishops of England, who, though they approved of episcopacy, did not consider it essentially necessary to constitute a true church of Christ. In proof of this declaration, permit me to quote the following testimonies. Archbishop *Whitgift*, of whose learning and wisdom no one ever doubted, says :—

"That the form of discipline is not particularly and by name set down in Scripture. No kind of government is expressed in the word, or can necessarily be concluded from thence." Dr. *Cosins* affirms, "All churches have not the same form of discipline, neither is it necessary that they should, seeing it cannot be proved that any certain particular form of church government is commended to us by the word of God." Dr. *Low* expresses himself to the same effect in the following words :—"No certain form of government is prescribed in the word, only general rules are laid down." Bishop Bridges says, "God hath not expressed the form of church government, at least not so as to bind us to it." Even King James, who said, "No bishop, no king," expresses himself in the following manner on this subject :—"That the civil power in any nation hath the right of prescribing what external form of church government it please, which doth most agree to the civil form of government in the state." Dr. *Sutcliffe* and *Crakenthorpe* assert the same thing. (See *Iren.* p. 394.) To these the names of many others might be added: but I shall content myself with only one more, which is that of Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of the 23d Article of

the English Church. He says, "Finally, if a company of Christians find the public worship where they live, to be so defiled that they cannot with a good conscience join in it, and if they do not *know* of any place to which they can conveniently go where they may worship God purely in a regular way; if, I say, such a body finding some that have been ordained, though to the lower functions, should submit it entirely to their conduct; or *finding none of these*, should, by a common consent, *desire some of their own number to minister to them in holy things*, &c.—though we are very sure that this is quite out of all rule, and could not be done without a very great sin, unless the *necessity were great and apparent*—yet if the necessity be *real* and *not feigned*, this is not condemned nor annulled by the article."

Now these were all stanch friends of the established Church of England, some of them bishops of acknowledged talents and reputation, and yet all supporters of the doctrine asserted in these numbers, and maintained by those foreign divines above quoted. Indeed the sticklers for divine right and an unbroken succession have been but comparatively few either in or out of that church.

That this was the view which Luther and his coadjutors took of this subject, is manifest from the fact, that the Lutheran Church is not organized on the same principles in every country where it exists. In Sweden and Norway the episcopal form is adopted; in Denmark the episcopal form is maintained, while the chief officer is denominated a *superintendent*; but "in Germany the superior power is vested in a *consistory* with a distinction of rank and privileges, and a subordination of inferior clergy to their superiors dif-

ferent from the parity of Presbyterianism." (See *Buck.*) But though this superiority of one minister over others is acknowledged, yet it is not a difference in order, but only *prima inter pares*, the first among equals, for the sake of a more orderly manner of conducting their ecclesiastical affairs. There is therefore no foundation from the opinions expressed by these ministers, much less from their practice, for inferring that they believed in the exclusive right of ordination in a third order, nor in the divine institution of diocesan episcopacy.

It is well known that the reformers were assailed by their popish adversaries with great virulence, and accused of differing as much among themselves as they did from their accusers. This being in part true, many efforts were made among the leaders of the several bands of Protestants to come as near together as they could consistently. This led them in Switzerland, in Germany, in France, and England, to make concessions to one another, on the several points concerning which there were differences of opinion, that this scandal might be removed as far as possible from among them. In this spirit of conciliation, the above opinions respecting episcopacy were expressed, which, while they evince the spirit of liberality by which they were actuated toward each other, manifest an abhorrence of that exclusive principle which now characterizes those who strive to press them into their service.

On the whole I cannot but conclude, from an impartial view of these quoted opinions, that they tend to establish the principle I have endeavored to maintain throughout these numbers, that though episcopacy be not expressly commanded in Scripture, it is allow-

able on Scriptural principles, and may therefore be adopted without any dereliction of duty, or of contravening any law of Christ's kingdom.

In my next, I shall inquire whether God does not claim the prerogative of breaking a nominal line of succession to pieces whenever it stands in his way of working

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NUMBER XXI.

God claims the right of rejecting a priesthood which had corrupted itself—Proved from the example of Eli and his house—From Scripture, Jer. xxiii, 30, 40; Mal. ii, 1, 9—Luther and Wesley—Gloomy consequences of uninterrupted succession—Earnest appeal.

HAVING shown that our position is sustained by the opinions of some of the ablest and best men, both in and out of the establishment—and I might have added also some respectable names in the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country*—I will now endeavor to redeem my pledge, that a ministry nominally in

* The following are the words of Bishop White:—"Ours calls herself episcopal. She affirms episcopacy to rest on Scriptural institution, and to have subsisted from the beginning. On the varying governments of other societies, she pronounces no judgment. The question is not whether we think correctly, but whether we are tolerated in what we think. If this be determined in the affirmative, we must, to be consistent, interdict all other than episcopalian ministry within our bounds."

This is just what we ask for ourselves. We condemn not others. Let them enjoy their liberty. But are we "*tolerated*," or as I have heretofore expressed it, "*allowed*," in thinking it right and expedient to establish episcopacy, without supposing it necessary to derive it from an unbroken line of succession from the apostles in a third order? This is all we ask. And if our opponents had let us alone, without impugning our orders and ordinances as spurious, we should have had no disposition

the line of succession which God himself had established, may, by its abuse of his mercies, become obnoxious to his displeasure, and be therefore by him broken to pieces.

It is well known that Aaron and his family were selected by the special command of God to minister at the altar among the Israelites. From the family of Levi the priests and the Levites were to be selected, in all generations to come. This was according to the appointment of God. By comparing Exodus xxix, 9; xi, 15, with Numbers xxv, 10–13, it will be perceived that God promised the priesthood to Aaron and his sons as "an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations; and the office of *high priest* was to descend to the *eldest* son from generation to generation. From

to disturb them. Nor are the present numbers written to invalidate their ministry, but simply to defend our own from their rude and reckless attacks. Let those, therefore, "who arraign us before the public" shoulder the responsibility of the discussion; and not attempt to transfer it to us merely because we presume to speak in our own behalf.

But I have quoted the above from Bishop White, to exhibit the amiable and liberal spirit which pervaded his breast, as also to show that his views quadrate with our own, and with the opinions of those reformers quoted in my previous number. All he asks is *toleration*. He does not even presume to condemn other denominations for not adhering to his views of episcopacy, nor yet to call in question the validity of their administrations. This moderate and catholic spirit was worthy of the venerable prelate who has left it on record, to the confusion of Dr. Chapman, Pro Ecclesia, and their endorsers, the Churchman, and others of a like temperament. If, therefore, our opponents will not allow that "we think *correctly*," let them at least tolerate us in what we do think," and not vainly and fruitlessly strive to make us believe that our ministers have no valid ordination, that our children are unbaptized, and that those who receive the Lord's supper at our hands are guilty of sacrilege! This is *intolerable*, and should not be endured.

subsequent events, which will be noticed presently, it seems that though this promise was expressed in the most absolute form, yet on their failing to fulfil the condition most evidently implied, the promise was withheld, or failed of its accomplishment. According to this divine regulation, the high priesthood descended from Aaron to his eldest son *Eleazar*, and from him to *Phinehas*, his grandson, to whom, on account of his zeal in vindicating the honor of God, in revenging the Midianites for their attempt to lead the children of Israel into idolatry, the priesthood was promised in a perpetual covenant. See Num. xxv, 7. But even the fulfilment of this promise was made to depend on the fidelity of those who were thus legally entitled to the honor of the priesthood, for on account of the unfaithfulness of his children, it was transferred to *Ithamar*, a *younger* branch of the Aaronic family.

But that we may see this awful prerogative of Jehovah displayed, in breaking in upon the line which he had thus conditionally established, let us turn our attention to *Eli*, a descendant of *Ithamar*, who was the high priest in the commencement of Samuel's government. In consequence of his neglecting to restrain the wickedness of his two sons, who officiated as priests under him, to the eldest of which the high priesthood belonged according to the line of descent, God said unto him—

"Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?"—"Wherefore the Lord God

of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me will I honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house."—"And the man of thine whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart; and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever." 1 Sam. ii, 27–35.*

* I have thought that this severe denunciation against Eli has been misinterpreted by many, and made to apply improperly to parents in general. Though it be true that parents are responsible for the general conduct of their children while in their minority, yet, if they determine to be wicked, in spite of all parental authority, prayers, and counsel, the consequence must rest upon their own heads.

But the capital fault of Eli appears to have been, in permitting his sons, knowing them to be wicked, to officiate as priests. Though he could not change their moral dispositions and habits, he could have interposed his authority to prevent them from performing the duties and enjoying the emoluments of the priesthood. A lesson this to those parents, being ministers themselves, who thrust their sons into the ministry, whether qualified or not. Though we may not succeed in reforming our sons, provided they are profligates, we may interpose our authority to prevent their desecrating the altar of God with their polluted hands. And let the example of Eli warn us of the consequences of such parental partiality.

This was a most awful denunciation! And in chap. iv, 11, we have an account of the fulfilment of this threatening, in the death of *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, in the battle which was fought with the Philistines, when the "ark of God was taken," the calamitous news of which so affected Eli, that "he fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy," iv, 18. Thus was the direct line of the high priesthood in the oldest son cut asunder, in the death which was inflicted upon Hophni, as a punishment for his sacrilegious conduct.

But this awful prediction had its more complete accomplishment in the reign of Solomon, when "he thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord, that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." See 1 Kings ii, 27. By this act, Solomon was instrumental in executing the vengeance of Almighty God upon the house of Eli, according to the prediction of the "prophet of Jehovah," for Abiathar was the last of the family of Eli who ministered before the Lord; and *Zadok*, who was made priest in the stead of Abiathar, was of the family of *Eleazar*, by which change the priesthood reverted back to the channel in which it flowed before it descended to *Ithamar*, the progenitor of *Eli*.

Thus we see that God claims and exercises the right of breaking to pieces the line of the priesthood whenever it becomes corrupted by wickedness, notwithstanding the most absolute promise he himself had made of its perpetuity. A melancholy proof this of the mutability of the human character, and a demonstration that in all the promises of God, though no

condition be expressed, one is always implied: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them," Jer. xviii, 9, 10. These words fully explain God's method of dealing with nations, kingdoms, and with individuals, and show that however *absolute* the promise may appear, there is always such a condition *implied* as involves a forfeiture of the blessings annexed to the promise if the condition be not fulfilled. So it was in the case of Eli's house, and so it will be in every priesthood, however much it may boast of its line of succession, which fails to answer the design of its institution. Who will persuade himself that the God who manifested his impartial justice toward the house of Aaron, would allow the bishopric of Rome to stand secure amidst the abominable pollutions by which its incumbents degraded and disgraced themselves? No, indeed! He has long since dashed this succession to pieces, and chosen others than those who filled it to be his ministers.

That this is His way of working is farther manifest from the following thundering language of the prophet:—"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit the people at all, saith the Lord."—"And as for the prophets, and the priest, and the people that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man, and his house." With what solemn weight

should such words sound in the ears of those who have no other evidence of their call to the work of the ministry, than their being in the line of succession! Such, according to this solemn message, though they may be in the line of the priesthood, "shall not profit the people," nor receive a reward of their labor, but *shall be punished* for their temerity and wickedness. Though they may claim their descent in the regular line, yet God saith that he never sent them; and hence, so far from their proving a blessing to the people, he saith, "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten," Jer. xxiii, 30–40.

Have not these words been awfully verified in the shattered line of succession we have been tracing? Could any race of men be more exposed to "a perpetual shame," and to "an everlasting reproach," than those whose names stand recorded upon the page of ecclesiastical history, after they usurped the powers which did not originally belong to them? But listen to the following words, which, if possible, are still more alarming:—

"And now, O YE PRIESTS, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed—And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him, of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was

in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. But ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore have I made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law," Mal. ii, 1–9.

What a tremendously awful passage is this! And with what point and pathos does the prophet appeal to the *covenant of life and peace* which was made with Levi, *who walked with God in peace*, and thereby *turned many from iniquity*, as an illustrious contrast to those wicked priests to whom this alarming address was made, who, in consequence of their having *departed out of the way*, had caused *many to stumble at the law!* In consequence of this shameful departure from the covenant of their God, the provisions of which required fidelity on their part in order to insure to them its promised blessings, they were now threatened, notwithstanding their lineal descent from Levi, with having their seed corrupted, their blessings cursed, and of being made contemptible and base among the people. Of what use now to them was their succession? Though it was such as God himself had established "in a perpetual covenant," yet so palpably had they violated its stipulations, that they had thrown themselves under the awful maledictions of heaven, and exposed themselves to have their seed so corrupted as to be cut off from the inheritance of their ancestors. And this fearful threatening had its accomplishment in the final overthrow of the entire Levitical priesthood, the prostration of their national

dignity, and their dispersion among the nations of the earth. For who knows but if they had remained faithful to the light of their own dispensation, and had fulfilled the high destiny to which they had been called, they might have been prepared to receive the Messiah in his true character when he appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and the descendants of those very priests been exalted to the distinguished honor and privilege of ministers of the *new and everlasting covenant?* "But because of unbelief they were cut off!"

Be this as it may, we know that the curse of God came upon them to the uttermost, and that those priests have been held up to the scorn and derision of mankind, and that from that day to this their seed has been so corrupted that it has produced naught but "briers and thorns, which is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Here then I think I have proved that a priesthood, though nominally in the line which God had established, may, by its flagrant acts of wickedness, make itself obnoxious to his sore displeasure, and expose itself to be thrust from the altar of God, and thereby be made base and contemptible before the people. And this is what I promised to do by the word of the Lord.

Let us apply these thundering truths to the case in hand. Think you that God has bound himself to a succession so regardless of all law and honor? Has he restricted himself to a line in the priesthood so sunk into moral and spiritual pollution that he is dependent upon it alone for the purity of his ordinances, and the salvation of the souls of the people? Did he pronounce such tremendous curses upon the descendants of Levi

as a punishment for their defection from the ordinances of their God, and will he pass by a Christian priesthood when it is equally corrupt, if not indeed more abominably defiled, and cause his blessings to descend upon mankind through their hands alone? No, indeed! He is bound by no such rules. As I have already proved, in every covenant he has ever made with mankind, even where it appears in the most absolute form, there are certain conditions annexed to it, on the performance of which depends the fulfilment of God's promises. And on the failure to fulfil these stipulations, God is bound, as well by the law of his own nature, which is immutably opposed to sin of every kind, as by the terms of the contract, to withhold the promised blessings, and, instead of these, to send "blasting and mildew upon all their borders."

This awful prerogative he has ever claimed and exercised. It is his unalterable law of procedure. And as he said respecting the rebellious house of Eli, "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart and in my mind," so he says to every rebellious church and Christian priesthood, "I will cut off thine arm and the arm of thine house," and ye shall no longer "cause my people to stumble at the law," by your abominations; and in your stead I will raise me up other ministers who will do all my pleasure. So God raised up Luther and his coadjutors to break down the rebellious house of Rome. For a similar purpose he raised up the reformers in England and Scotland, that he might rid himself of the worse than useless lumber which had long encumbered the church and cursed the people. And when the Protestants had corrupted themselves by departing from the letter and spirit of their own stand-

ards, for the same purpose, and in the exercise of the same prerogative, he raised up Wesley and his coadjutors to reform the church, and to save the people from being carried away with the floods of ungodliness. God never did, nor ever will, divest himself of this right. What puny arm is that which will attempt to set up his feeble, rotten, debased, polluted, and indescribably disgraced line of succession, against the right hand of the Most High, and then say, By this means alone Thou must work! We alone are thy chosen instruments to make "known thy name in all the earth!" "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at such consummate folly. Such a priesthood, so supported, so polluted and desecrated, will he, "in his sore displeasure," "dash to pieces as a potter's vessel."

Think you that the God of purity looked on with complacency and delight upon such men as Leo X., while seated in the chair of succession, and while employed in opposing and persecuting Luther, who broke in upon the line of succession by his bold innovations upon the Church of Rome! Upon such men as Lavington and others, who pleaded their lineal descent in the genealogy of apostolic bishops, while they poured contempt upon such men as John Wesley and his compeers in this holy work, who were striving by every possible method to save the church and the people from the destruction which was coming upon the ungodly? Think you that He smiled with approbation upon those pretended successors of the apostles in this country, who opposed and persecuted the Methodist preachers who were risking their lives and their all for the salvation of souls, while those lineal descendants of the ancient bishops were

running from their flocks, turning soldiers, and living upon the glebes, without even discharging one single act of sacred duty?

And suppose God had been confined to these idle shepherds, these polluted priests, these desecrated bishops, and to those ignorant, stupid hirelings, and had bound himself, according to their doctrine of succession, to them alone for the channel of communicating with mankind; pray tell me, ye who are of this opinion, *What would have become of the world?* Where would have been the church? Buried in eternal oblivion! The lamp of truth would have been long since extinguished. Neither Bible, prayer-book, hymn-book, nor a Christian priesthood, worth having, would have ever blessed the world. The symbolical heavens would have been long since covered with a dense cloud of impenetrable darkness. Neither sun, moon, nor stars, would be shining upon the earth. Not a single ray of light would now be seen radiating from the Sun of righteousness to direct the wandering pilgrim up to glory and immortality.

See, then, the gloomy consequences of your doctrine! See the dismal gulf to which your turbid stream of succession and exclusive rights inevitably carries us! And must we—O must we!—to escape the curse pronounced upon schismatics—to secure the blessings of covenanted mercies—to bring ourselves and children within the pale of the true church, and to shelter ourselves from the scorching rays of divine indignation—must we, I ask with all the fervor and earnestness which an honest wish to know the truth inspires—must we, I say, all renounce our baptism, our sacramental and ordination vows—must we acknowledge that we have been guilty of rending the

body of Christ—of disturbing God's established order of procedure—or otherwise lie down loaded with the dishonor belonging to interlopers, and for ever groan under the blighting curse pronounced upon the devourers of God's heritage, and the dividers of his flock! O ye, our friends, help to deliver us from a malediction so terrible! And yet all this must come upon us, or be avoided only on condition of our escaping by the uncovenanted mercies of God. So says the doctrine of succession—of exclusive rights! I cannot therefore more appropriately conclude this number than by giving vent to the following prayer: "From all *such* schism and heresies," as would expose us to a malediction so heavy, "good Lord deliver us."

NUMBER XXII.

God chooses his ministers—Change of dispensations—Change of priesthood—Proved from several examples—Luther's call and qualifications—Wesley's—His call extraordinary—In what sense—Ordained, not for the English Church, but for the Methodists—Over these he had acquired rights which none other had—On these is founded his right to ordain ministers for the Methodists.

HAVING discarded the doctrine of succession as being essential to constitute a true ministry of Jesus Christ, it seems proper that we should inquire what is necessary to constitute such a ministry. It will not be disputed by any who believe in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, that God exercises the prerpgative of choosing such men as he sees fit for the accomplishment of his purposes, and for the performance of his work; and that he, as the sovereign of the universe, calls and employs them in such way and manner as he judges most conducive to his own

glory and the good of mankind. In the righteous exercise of this prerogative he has not heretofore confined, and therefore need not now confine himself to any one particular method, nor restrict himself to any one family, in the selection of his instruments to carry on and perfect his work.

That his dispensations have changed, no one acquainted with the history of his providence will for a moment dispute. In the early ages of society, it seems that the first born of each family performed the offices of priest, prophet, and king. Hence arose the patriarchal government, such as that exercised by Abraham, and several of his descendants. And even in his day there was a Melchizedec, whose genealogy is not traced in the sacred history, but who was, nevertheless, "king of Salem, and a priest of the Most High God," and who "blessed Abraham" on his return from the slaughter of the kings. Nor do we find Abraham refusing this blessing because Melchizedec was not in the regular line of the priesthood, or because he did not belong to his own tribe. And yet so eminent was this man, who on this occasion burst upon the world for a moment and then disappeared again for ever, that he is considered by the apostle as an illustrious type of Jesus Christ, who "remaineth a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec."

But after the call of Moses, and the establishment of the Israelites as a distinct people, under the special government of God, Aaron was selected as the high priest of his profession, and the priesthood was established in his family, on condition of their fidelity, to all generations. We have seen, however, that in consequence of their departure from the covenant of

their God, he forsook them, and poured upon them the phials of his holy indignation. This was required from the immutability of his character, from his invariable opposition to sin.

The same marks of his displeasure were manifested toward the Christian priesthood after it became corrupted by wicked works, and God exercised his prerogative in selecting such instruments as he saw fit to "confound the wisdom of the wise, and to bring to naught the understanding of the prudent."

Indeed from the facts, most awful and admonitory in their character, which have been spread before the reader in the preceding numbers, it appears that however canonically men may be set apart for the work of the ministry, under either the old or new dispensation, they could not escape the just judgment of Almighty God, provided their characters were bad and their works flagitious. For this cause he rejected the family of Eli, and threatened the whole order of the Levitical priesthood with a total overthrow. Nay, he not only threatened the priesthood with annihilation, so far as their official character was concerned, but he visited the whole nation of the Jews with a similar destruction as a punishment for their rebellion against his righteous government. And the same retributive justice was afterward shown toward those Christian nations who so frequently abused his forbearance. Behold the rise, and spread, and establishment of the Mohammedan imposture in Asia and Africa, as well as in many parts of Europe. Has not the very metropolis of the empire which was subjected to the reign of Christianity by Constantine, long since been the metropolis of this very pernicious and bloody religion? Constantinople was once the seat and the boast of a

Christian bishopric, the incumbents of which looked down with haughty contempt upon their rival competitors. How long since has she groaned under the oppression of the successors of Mohammed! The august line of her bishops, of which she once boasted, is not only snapped asunder, but the Christian temples have been either demolished or changed into mosques for the worship of the false prophet—her altars trampled under foot—and her priests scattered to the four winds of heaven. And in the present state of the seven churches of Asia, mentioned in the Apocalypse, we may see an awful verification of the prophetic threatenings of the Spirit of God, when he spoke "unto the churches," by his servant John. Are there no warnings for us in these things—in these predictions, so awfully verified by events? Shall we now deceive ourselves with the delusive dreams that merely because we are in the succession we shall escape the like judgments? Did not the Jews, in our Saviour's time, delude themselves with the same idle pretensions? "We have Abraham to our father, and were never in bondage to any man," was the vain plea by which they attempted to fortify themselves against the just rebukes of the Son of God. None, indeed, ever pleaded their lineal descent with more confidence, and yet more fruitlessly—although their plea was founded in truth—than these devoted people. And yet they were rejected as withered and unfruitful branches, "whose end was nigh unto burning."

Upon the whole, nothing is more evident than this —that neither a lineal descent according to the flesh, nor a succession according to canonical order, when unaccompanied with the requisite moral and spiritual qualifications, will constitute a man a minister in God's

account, nor exempt him from his malediction, unless he repent and turn from his evil ways.

Think you that God would have sanctioned Luther in organizing a new church, as a presbyter in the Church of Rome, had he remained wedded to his errors? Think you that if he had shut his eyes to the light which was poured into his understanding when he began to turn over the pages of that New Testament which he found in his convent, God would have given him the marks of his approbation, simply because he had been consecrated a priest according to the order of succession? Let him believe this who can. Let him assert it who wishes to render himself ridiculous in the estimation of all enlightened and sober Protestants.*

Now if this did not qualify him for a reformer, and give him a right to establish a church independently of the Romish hierarchy, if he had such qualification

* A writer in the Churchman, who tells his readers that he is a *Methodist preacher!* says that if a man is but canonically ordained, however vicious his life, his official acts are valid, and cites in proof of his assertion that he had a child baptized by a minister who was afterward detected as a wicked character. What is the conclusion? Therefore his acts were valid! Though the reader may be at a loss to perceive the connection between the premises and the conclusion, yet it will follow, I think, that if a valid ordination makes the official acts of the incumbent valid, then an *in*valid ordination renders all the acts of the incumbent *in*valid also. This conclusion being legitimate, as this *Diaconas*, which is his public cognomen, who he tells us is a Methodist preacher of some years' standing, has doubtless baptized many infants, and not a few adults, during the time he unfortunately held his spurious credentials, whenever he shall succeed to a reconsecration according to the order of succession, will have some arduous duties to perform in retracing his steps as a Methodist itinerant, to administer the ordinance again to those upon whom he has laid unconsecrated hands.

and such right at all, he must have derived them from another source. What source was this? I answer, *God himself.* I say God himself—I mean this in the most unqualified sense. Without such a call and qualification as is implied in this answer, his consecration would have been entirely worthless. He would still have been an ignorant monk, fit only for his cell, qualified to act only as an obedient son of the holy mother church, and as a passive instrument in the hands of his holiness, the pope of Rome. But becoming obedient to the light of God's truth, which shone upon him as he perused the sacred pages, he emerged into the liberty of God's children, was inspired by God's Spirit to proclaim his truth, and wage a public war against the pope, the devil, and the flesh. And as God qualified him to pull down the strong holds of popery, so he commanded him, as the results of his conduct abundantly demonstrate, to build up a purer church, on the holy principles of the gospel. Here was the source of his authority. Here was his high commission. He was doubtless as much commissioned of God to denounce the judgments of heaven against the abominations of popery, and to proclaim the emancipation of the children of men from their degrading thraldom, as Moses was to say to Pharaoh, *Let my people go.* And if the bishop's hands had never been laid upon his head, nor the pope's breath ever blessed him, under those circumstances his authority would have been nothing less—his commission equally authoritative and divine.

You must allow this, or take the following consequences—that Luther was commissioned to become a reformer, before he was reformed himself—to enlighten others before the light ever dawned upon his own

mind—and to preach salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, while as yet he neither believed nor understood any such doctrine! And why? Merely because he had been consecrated a presbyter in the fallen Church of Rome! If such be your belief I must despair of convincing you. You are proof against reason, Scripture, and the dictates of common sense. If not, then you are no successionist, and, of course, must acknowledge that a true minister of Jesus Christ derives his authority from God.

Let us apply the same reasoning to John Wesley. Did the simple fact of his being a presbyter of the Church of England give him authority and impart to him the qualification to become a reformer in that church, and finally to establish an independent community? The supposition is absurd in itself. And yet most of the objections which are urged against his proceedings are founded upon this very supposition. Those who object to his organizing a separate church in America, look at him simply as an ordinary presbyter in the Church of England, acting under the authority alone which he received by his consecration to that office; and their objections derive all their force from the false presumption that he took upon himself the authority to ordain presbyters *in* and *for* that church, and at last to consecrate a bishop in their sense of that term *in* and *for* that same communion. Nothing can be more erroneous.

In the first place, the presbyter John Wesley was as evidently called of God, in an extraordinary manner, to *do the work of an evangelist*, to reform the nation, to revive the pure principles of the gospel, and to be the leader and head of a numerous people, as was Luther, Calvin, or any other of the reformers. If any

were disposed to dispute this, I would point to the man himself, to his character and qualifications, to his principles and labors, and, above all, to the astonishing results of his evangelical preaching, writing, and other exercises of a minister of Jesus Christ. If these do not bespeak for him an extraordinary call from God, then may we despair of ever finding one among all the sons of men.

What I mean by this extraordinary call is, that he was eminently qualified, "above many of his equals" in official standing, by mental endowments, by literary and scientific attainments, by a deep and genuine experience of divine things, by moral and spiritual qualifications—and that he made "full proof of his ministry," by a diligence and activity rarely equalled by either contemporaries, predecessors, or followers, in every department of ministerial labors—and, last of all, that his proceedings in the exercise of all these gifts and advantages were accompanied by as evident tokens of the divine approbation as can be found in the annals of the church. He that can impartially read the history of the man and his works, and not feel a conviction of this, it seems to me, must be blind to the light of evidence, and impervious to the rays of truth. The piety of his heart, the purity of his motives, the uprightness of his deportment, the acuteness of his intellect, the soundness of his judgment, the honesty of his intention in embracing the truth as it is in Jesus, the boldness and energy with which he proclaimed the unadulterated word of God, and then the success, unparalleled in modern times, which attended his immense labors—all attest his divine call to the "ministry of reconciliation," and proclaim in the ears of all impartial judges that he was no ordinary messenger of God to the churches.

In the second place, he never exercised his office to ordain either presbyters or bishops *in* and *for* the *Church of England.* This, he well knew, was not his province. He also knew equally well that there was no call, either from the necessity of the case, or from the organization of that church, for him to do any such thing. In that church there were regular bishops, ready and willing to do their duty in this respect so far as regarded their own church. With their functions, therefore, he presumed not to intermeddle, nor did he attempt to disturb the order of their proceedings. In these respects he remained passive. But when he became the father, under the blessing of God upon his labors, of a numerous family of spiritual children, the case and the circumstances were materially altered. And though, from a reluctance even to seem to intrude upon others' prerogatives, he long hesitated in respect to the exercise of those powers with which he was conscious the Head of the church had invested him for the edification and salvation of thousands, he was at length impelled from a conviction of duty, to do as he did; and from the authority which God had most evidently given him, he stepped forth from his retreat behind the bulwarks of the national church, showed himself to the world in his true character, as an extraordinary messenger of God, ordained, with the assistance of other presbyters of the same church, presbyters, and a bishop —not for the Church of England, but for the Methodist societies in America—not for the Protestant Episcopal or any other church in this country, but simply for that branch of the church of Christ which God had made him the instrument of raising up and establishing. In doing this, he neither intruded him-

self upon ground preoccupied by others, nor assumed powers which did not belong to him. God had most evidently given the people to him, and made it his indispensable duty to provide for them the ordinances of his house. In doing this, therefore, he did but discharge an obligation which arose out of the relation he sustained to the whole Methodist family. And as he invaded no man's rights in ordaining a Christian ministry for his American children, so no other man had any right to interfere with him, either by acting in his stead, or by condemning him in the exercise of his powers. Those who now plead the right they had, or their predecessors in office, to make this provision for the Methodist societies, are themselves the *would-be* intruders "into other men's labors," and interlopers into other men's folds. What right had *they* to interfere in the affairs of a community which they never formed? What right had *they* to exercise a government over a people which had been raised up by others, not only without their help, but in opposition to their wishes, and even in despite of their reproaches and persecutions? These are questions I wish to urge home upon their understandings and consciences, because their reproaches have compelled us to "become fools in this confidence of boasting."

Civilians, and writers upon moral science, enumerate several sorts of rights. The right of *inheritance*, of *possession*, of *purchase*, and the right of *conquest*. The Methodist people were Wesley's, under the blessing of God upon his labors, in a two-fold sense. They had been conquered to the obedience of Christ by "the sword of the Spirit," which he and his sons in the gospel so successfully wielded. Like others, these people were once "alienated from God by

wicked works;" but by the labors of the Wesleyans they had "become fellow citizens of the household of faith." They therefore belonged to him by *conquest.* They belonged to him also by lawful *possession.* God had given them to him as his spiritual offspring. He therefore had not only a right to provide for them as his spiritual children, but it was, as I have before said, his bounden duty. He therefore possessed rights over the Methodist people which no one else did or could, and owed them duties which no one else was competent to perform. By what rule then of logic—by what law of either God or man, did those idle shepherds, who not only looked on with cold indifference while this spiritual warfare was successfully going forward, but absolutely threw the weight of their influence into the scale of the enemy, and joined his standard—by what law, I say, of either God or man, did they, or do now any of their advocates come forward, and plead their right to interfere in this matter? What right had they to claim this rich inheritance of souls? Did they assist in conquering them to Christ? No, verily. While Wesley and his associates were successfully carrying the war into the enemy's country, and winning thousands of trophies to Jesus Christ, those idle shepherds were barking with the wolves, actually setting them on the flock, and shouting for the conquest over it. And now when the conquest is so far achieved, the victory in part won, and it becomes needful to put a fence around the fold, and provide the flock with the bread and water of life, these opposers of the work come forward, and demand that the whole should have been given into their hands! Wesley and those other men of God, who, amidst toils, watchings, and fastings,

privations and persecutions—persecutions from the very men who claimed the spoils of the victory—are set down in their calender as schismatics, and intruders into the fields of other men's labors! Now I ask in the name of common sense—that common sense which discriminates between those rights which originate from a laborious and successful service, and those which are claimed under false pretences—I ask and appeal to this dictate of every man's unbiassed judgment for an answer—which manifests the greatest degree of presumption, he who comes forward quietly, without noise and pomp, and takes possession of that which has thus been given to him by the immortal Head of the church, or he who sounds the trumpet before him under pretence that he is the rightful lord of the soil, brandishes his rusty sword of succession, and denounces both father and children, all as without the pale of the true church? Need I pause for answer? Let those answer who, under the profession that they are seeking a purer fountain of power and authority, are goading their rightful mother with the stale slang that they have become dissatisfied with their ordination, when it is to be feared that other and more interested motives, at least in some instances, have moved them to action. On this solemn subject there will be "great searchings of heart" in "that day for which all other other days were made."

Now suppose that John Wesley had been nothing more than a simple presbyter, and had imitated the conduct of the sleepy clergy of his day, manifesting a total indifference to the interests of the people, do you suppose he would have been justified in establishing a separate communion, and of organizing an independent church? To ask the question is to answer

it. There would have been no call for any such thing. He would have had no people to organize a church with. Of course he could have possessed no rights over such a people.

His rights, therefore, were acquired over and above those which he possessed simply as a presbyter of the Church of England; and it is on this ground chiefly that we place his defence in the exercise of his functions as an overseer of the flock of Christ. Yet allowing that the ordinations of the English Church are valid—which I am not disposed to dispute—it follows that John Wesley was a validly consecrated presbyter of the church of Christ, and hence whatever powers he derived from this source he retained inviolably, for he was never deposed, nor even officially censured. As a presbyter, therefore, he had rights of which he was never dispossessed. But in addition to these he had acquired rights over the people he was made the honored and happy instrument of raising up, which no other possessed, and therefore had no right to exercise.

NUMBER XXIII.

Objections—God's ordinary method of working—Wesley had an extraordinary call, by the Holy Spirit—This is essential to all ministers—Proved from various considerations—Objections to this view obviated—Methodism arose from necessity—Anecdote—Fault of the established clergy—This created Methodism—Conclusion of this branch of the subject.

AGAINST the views which have been expressed in my last number, it will probably be objected by some, that it is enthusiastic to expect now, in these modern

times, any such extraordinary call from God as has been supposed in the case of Luther and Wesley. But I think I shall be able to show that this objection is founded upon an erroneous view of the dispensations of God.

In one sense, I allow, there is nothing extraordinary in the call and qualifications of either Luther or Wesley. God's ordinary method is to work by means, and to save mankind by the instrumentality of men inspired and sent by him for that purpose. The history of his manner of working confirms the truth of this remark. He sent Moses to be the deliverer of Israel, and afterward, throughout the whole of that dispensation, warned and instructed the people by prophets and teachers, "rising up early and sending them." The same procedure was observed in the opening and establishment of the gospel dispensation, and all the subsequent revivals of religion down to the present day have been promoted in the same way. This, therefore, is his usual, his ordinary method of working, to instruct and save men by "men of like passions with themselves." In this respect there was nothing extraordinary in God's calling Luther to reform the church from the errors of popery, nor in his calling Wesley to save the people from the dead formality into which Protestants had generally fallen. In these things we perceive the same procedure as has ever distinguished God's manner of working with the children of men in all ages.

But while we acknowledge this, it must be confessed that he has made, and no doubt will continue to make, a display of his sovereignty and the energies of his grace and Spirit, in calling men in an extraordinary way, and while they yield a willing obedience

to his call, of endowing them with more than common discernment, courage, and energy of character, as instruments to accomplish his purposes of benevolence to the children of men. Such a call, I believe, had both Luther and Wesley, as well as many others who have been raised up at various times.

But the whole weight of this objection rests on the erroneous presumption that God does not now, as formerly, call men by his Spirit and the indications of his providence to do his work. It is, in fact, a virtual denial of all direct divine agency in the affairs of men, and supposes them left to be managed merely by human wisdom and human might. And what is this but a species of veiled infidelity? Is it any thing short of excluding God from the government of the world, any farther than merely by a blind superintendence of the laws which he stamped upon his works when he brought them into existence? The objection, indeed, is of the same family with those which deny the direct agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and in witnessing to the believer his adoption into the family of God.

Let us therefore examine it a little, and see whether it have any foundation in truth. In the first place, it is contradicted by all those Protestants whose formularies I have examined which are used in the induction of candidates in the ministry. This question, either in form or substance, is asked of all such candidates:—

"Do you think you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?"

This question certainly supposes, not only that a man is *moved by the Holy Spirit* to become a minister of the Lord Jesus, but that he is *so* moved that he is

conscious of it—that he has an evidence satisfactory to himself, and that he gives evidence to others that he has been called by the Holy Spirit to this sacred work. This, therefore, is supposed to be the common privilege of all true ministers of the sanctuary. Indeed, if a man cannot belong to Christ, as one of his children, without having the *Spirit of Christ*, much less can he be his minister unless he have that self-same Spirit. He must not only have this Spirit in its ordinary influences upon his heart in common with all other Christians, but the Spirit is supposed to move him especially to this holy work, so that the person is fully satisfied that he is moving in obedience to God's will.

I do not mean to assert that God miraculously qualifies men for such a work. In this, as in all his other dispensations, he adapts means to ends, uses men as willing and obedient instruments to his will, and selects such as are qualified in an ordinary way by natural endowments, by a studious attention to their duty, by which means their minds have been properly disciplined, and expanded with enlarged and comprehensive views of God's character and ways. These men, being thus prepared by a proper attention to the ordinary duties of their station, first embracing the truth as it is in Jesus, having their hearts fired and filled with love to God and man, usually become, under the influence of that eternal Spirit which giveth understanding to the simple, instruments of great good to mankind, provided they are obedient "to the heavenly call." Such were Luther and Wesley, and many others who might be mentioned. And they afforded all the evidence of their call from God, not by the performance of miracles similar to those which

accompanied the ushering in and establishment of the gospel dispensation, for these were no longer necessary, but of that supernatural influence which is essential to the awakening and conversion of a world of sinners.

Those who deny this supernatural influence, as I before intimated, exclude the agency of God from the great work of man's salvation. They do, in effect, attribute to man the power of his own salvation. And they moreover suppose that a minister of Jesus Christ is armed with nothing more than "enticing words of man's wisdom"—nothing more than the power of human persuasion—when he goes out upon the warfare of conquering the world to Christ. It is in fact denying the whole doctrine of the divine influence in illuminating the understanding, and changing the heart, and intimating particular duties to men, as well as excluding those providential indications which are so evidentally manifested toward all God's servants. And all this is but a disguised infidelity, as remote from the doctrines of the Bible and the genius of Christianity as the Koran is to the truth of God. This modern species of skepticism had no existence in the minds of the reformers. In all their writings, particularly in those of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Knox, Cranmer, and other eminent men of their day, who arose under the quickening influence of God's Spirit to stem the torrent of iniquity, and to roll back the mighty flood of error from the church, the necessity of the eternal Spirit was most strenuously insisted upon, as indispensable to constitute a man a true Christian, and more especially to qualify him for a competent minister of Jesus Christ. They knew well that in this their strength consisted.

It is indeed this which constitutes the living ministry of Jesus Christ. All the human learning in the universe, were it grafted upon the most expanded human intellect, will not qualify a man who is destitute of the Spirit of God to be an evangelical minister. He may, it is true, talk eloquently in favor of Christianity, discourse learnedly and orthodoxly on its doctrines, and even expound the Scriptures in an accurate manner; but unless his heart has been sealed by the Spirit of God, and he himself has been called to this work, and led forward in it by that self-same Spirit, he is but a "blind leader of the blind," and both he and his hearers will "fall into the ditch" of error together; and if, by the abounding mercy of God, they be saved at all, it "will be so as by fire."

What has proved a greater curse to the church than an unsanctified, a dead ministry? And what is a dead ministry, but such as is made of men "destitute of the Spirit." This, wherever it has existed, has always rested as a withering incubus upon the church, and prevented the revival and spread of true godliness. The necessity, therefore, of a living and spiritual ministry, should be insisted upon as essential to the interests of true religion, and as constituting the prime qualification of all those who attempt to instruct mankind in the important concerns of eternity. This is what we ask in behalf of all, however humble the sphere in which they move, who profess to be the ministers of the Lord Jesus.

Now what I contend for is, that John Wesley furnished every Scriptural and rational evidence which should be demanded in favor of such a call. He brought all his great learning, his scientific attainments, his outward call to the ministry, and laid them at the

feet of Jesus Christ, making himself the "man of one book," the book of God, and confessing his entire dependence on the "Spirit of truth," for "every good and perfect gift." And in the diligent and conscientious exercise of these advantages and gifts, he walked forth under the directions of that divine Providence which ever watches over the affairs of men, particularly of his church, and furnished the most indubitable proofs that he was commissioned from God to declare his counsel unto the people—to explain, enforce, and defend the truths of his word. As a simple presbyter in the Church of England, destitute of these advantages, and of this divine call to his work, he might have remained, like thousands of others, fellow presbyters, in obscurity, never known beyond the precincts of his parish, or if known at all, only to his and the church's disgrace. It was not, therefore, the credentials which he received from the archbishop of Canterbury which gave him either his qualification or his commission; but it was most evidently his other endowments, his designation to this work by the Head of the church, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. These were his credentials. On these his claims are rested.

But I have said enough upon this head. Another objection which I anticipate, and will endeavor to obviate, is this—It may be said by some, that if this be indeed so, then every man who is moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon him the sacred office, may set up for a reformer, may become the head of a sect, and may consecrate others to the work of the ministry. This, however, by no means follows.

In the first place, to entitle him to this distinction, he must make out a similar case of necessity to

that which existed in the days of Luther and of Wesley.

Secondly, he must furnish similar evidences of his call and qualifications for such a work. A man may be called of God to labor in a certain sphere, and yet never called of him to step out of the ordinary path, as those two eminent men were, to do an extraordinary work.

In the third place, he must produce similar fruits of his ministry, as evidences of his divine call to such a peculiar work. Let these same evidences meet in any individual, under similar circumstances, and we will recognize him in a similar character, but not till then.

But to all the arguments which have been derived from the necessity of the case, and from the call and qualifications of Wesley for the peculiar work in which he was engaged, it may be still urged as an objection, that evangelical light has increased in the various churches, and therefore there was no need of a separate organization.

This objection takes for granted that this increase of light, and zeal, and effort, has been brought about independently of Methodism : whereas the truth is that it has resulted, under the blessing of God upon its labors, from this very Methodism against which its enemies array themselves. Any and every impartial man who is at all acquainted with the history of events for a century past, must be convinced of this. What indeed was the state of the Christian world when John Wesley commenced his ministerial career? The distinctive doctrines of the gospel, the atonement by Jesus Christ, justification by faith in him, the new birth, and the witness and fruit of the Spirit, were

nearly banished from the pulpits; while practical godliness was laid aside for a mere fashionable round of pleasures, and if religion became the theme of conversation at all, it was a religion which conformed to the spirit and maxims of the world. A reformation in this respect, I grant, has been effected, and I rejoice to record the fact that it has not been confined to the Methodists; it has spread less or more among all denominations; but it has been the radiations of Methodism; and therefore, instead of its being an argument against the system, is one of the most powerful proofs in its favor. God hath, in this respect, if our enemies will have it so, "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and things that were not, to bring to naught the things that were." As the regular clergy would not do his work, God raised up those that would. As they threw the weight of their influence into the scale of those who "had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof," God, in mercy to the world, called others whose "preaching was not in word only, but in power, and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost." Through the indefatigable labors of these men, so much despised and persecuted, and even condemned as intruders into the field of labor, Scriptural light and knowledge, experimental and practical godliness, have been widely diffused among all orders, and all denominations of Christians; and, thanks to the God of love, this gracious work is still spreading, and I humbly trust will continue to spread "until the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," and "all nations shall come and worship before him."

Hence these facts, so far from being a ground of objection against our proceedings, are a reason why

we should continue to press forward in the use of those means which God has so signally owned and blessed to the salvation of souls.

Methodism arose from the necessity of the times. Had the regular clergy, the bishops, and others in the establishment, done their duty, lived and preached according to the letter and spirit of their own articles of religion, and the pious and holy sentiments breathed in their formularies of devotion, there had been no necessity for the institution of Methodism, and John Wesley had never been known otherwise than as a faithful coadjutor among his fellow presbyters of equal talents and zeal, striving with them for the "faith of the gospel." If, therefore, there were any thing irregular in the proceedings of Wesley and his associates, the fault was not in them, but in those who, by their neglect of their duty, made it necessary for them to do as they did, to save sinners from perdition. This is finely illustrated by the following anecdote of Mr. Charles Wesley and Archbishop Robinson, primate of Ireland. Being at the Hot-wells, near Bristol, he met Mr. C. Wesley in the pump room. After some time, the archbishop observed,

"*Mr. Wesley*, you must be sensible that I have heard many things of you and your brother; but I have not believed them. I knew you better. But one thing has always surprised me,—your employing laymen.

C. Wesley.—It is your fault, my lord.

Archbishop.—My fault, Mr. Wesley?

C. Wesley.—Yes, my lord, yours and your brethren.

Archbishop.—How so, sir?

C. Wesley.—Why, my lord, you *hold your peace*, and the *stones cry out.*

They took a turn in silence. His grace, however, rallied:

Archbishop.—But I hear they are unlearned men.

C. Wesley.—Very true, my lord; in general they are so: so *the dumb ass rebukes the prophet.*"

His grace immediately turned the conversation.

And well he might, for a pertinent reply was impossible.

It was, therefore, the fault of the clergy that rendered the doings of Wesley necessary, and which furnishes us with an unanswerable argument in his defence. Had they, with the bishops at their head, as I before remarked, possessed the spirit of piety so plainly inculcated in their daily prayers, and preached the doctrines of their church in power and purity, there had been no call for the machinery of Methodism to rouse the world from its spiritual lethargy.

Similar remarks will apply to the state of things in this country. According to the testimony of Bishop White, and others I have before quoted, there was a great deficiency in vital piety here, both among the clergy and the laity. And that the labors of the Methodist ministry contributed to arouse them from their lethargy, and to awaken a spirit of evangelical zeal, which has exerted a most salutary influence upon the American churches, who will deny? "This is the Lord's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

NUMBER XXIV.

Three orders in the ministry recognized—In what sense—Order of deacons—Term of office—Manner in which these were first chosen—They were ministers of the word—Assistants to the apostles in the distribution of the common stock of the church and in preaching—Their qualifications a proof of this—Sermon and martyrdom of Stephen—This took place after his consecration—Philip's preaching and miracles—This a proof of the above position—The same proved from 1 Tim. i, 13—Also by quotations from Polycarp and Ignatius, and from Mosheim—These deacons not mere laymen—They baptized and assisted at the eucharist—Their prescribed duties—Summary view of the whole subject submitted to the reader.

BEFORE I proceed farther, I wish to present the reader with our view of another officer in the church, denominated *deacon.* It will be perceived that we have all along recognized three orders in the ministry, deacons, elders or presbyters, and superintendents or bishops, without, however, supposing that this third order in the ministry is essential to the existence and vitality of the church. It is sufficient for our purpose to have shown that this organization is allowable on Christian principles—that it does not contravene any established or known precept of Christ—nor yet derogate from the honor and order of the Christian ministry. In this particular we differ from the Protestant Episcopalians, and approximate nearer, in respect to the *power of ordination,* to the Presbyterians, while, as it respects the *power of jurisdiction,* we again form nearly a parallel line with the former.

There is, however, one particular in which we differ more from the Presbyterians than we do from the Protestant Episcopalians—I mean in respect to the order in the Christian ministry denominated *deacons.* Without, however, entering into any length-

ened controversy with those who may dissent from us on this item of church order, I shall proceed to state what appears to me to be the scriptural and apostolic theory and practice upon this subject.

It is admitted, I believe, on all hands, that there were what were called Διαχονοι, (*deacons*) in the primitive church, and that this was a term of *official* designation; but it is a subject of some dispute whether it represented mere laymen appointed to take charge of the alms of the church, to search out and relieve the sick and the poor, or whether, in addition to these duties, they were regular ministers of the word. As a church we have adopted the latter opinion, for the following reasons:—

1. The sacred Scriptures, as it appears to me, most evidently favor this opinion. In Acts vi. 1–6, we have an account of the *seven deacons** who were

* I have frequently had occasion to notice that those terms of office used by the New Testament writers to designate the ministers of the Christian church, were borrowed from the Jewish Scriptures, and hence came to have a fixed and technical meaning, somewhat different from that which was affixed to them before. The following remarks in reference to this subject are taken from Dr. Adam Clarke's note on Acts vi, 4.

"The office of *deacon*, διακονος, came to the Christian from the Jewish church. Every synagogue had at least three *deacons*, which were called פרנסים, *parnasim*, from פרנס, *parnas*, *to feed, nourish, support, govern.* The פרנס *parnas* or *deacon*, was a sort of judge in the synagogue, and in each, *doctrine* and *wisdom* were required, that they might be able to *discern* and give *right judgment* in things both *sacred* and *civil.* The חזן *chazan*, and שמש *shamash*, were also a sort of *deacons.* The first was the priest's *deputy*, and the last was, in some cases, the *deputy* of this *deputy*, or the *sub-deacon.* In the New Testament the *apostles* are called *deacons*, 2 Cor. vi, 4; Eph. iii, 7; Col. i, 23: see also 2 Cor. xi, 15. Christ himself, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, is called the *deacon of the cir-*

chosen by the church, and then presented to the apostles that they might be consecrated for their special and sacred work. If any man say that these were set apart for the purpose of *serving tables*, let him remember that it was a sort of service to which the apostles had devoted themselves until now, and therefore it could not have been incompatible with the ministerial or even apostolic office, and hence this objection makes nothing against the supposition that these deacons were also preachers of the gospel.

The qualifications which the apostles required of those who should be chosen to this work, are such as plainly indicate that they were designed for the ministry of the word, as well as for this special service of distributing the alms of the church among the poor widows. It seems that the labors of the public ministry had so accumulated on the hands of the apostles, that the equitable distribution of the property which had been placed at their feet as common stock,

cumcision, λεγω δε Χριστον Ιησουν διακονον γεγενησθαι περιτομης, Rom. xv, 8. As the word implies to *minister* or *serve*, it was variously applied, and pointed out all those who were employed in helping the bodies or souls of men; whether *apostles*, *bishops*, or those whom we call *deacons*. Some remark that there were *two orders of deacons*: 1. Διακονοι της τραπεζης, *Deacons of the* TABLE, whose business it was to take care of the alms collected in the church, and distribute them among the poor, widows, &c. 2. Διακονοι του λογου, *Deacons of the* WORD, whose business it was to preach and variously instruct the people. It seems that after the persecution raised against the apostolic church, in consequence of which they became *dispersed*, the *deaconship of tables* ceased, as did also the *community of goods*; and Philip, who was one of those deacons, who at first served tables, betook himself entirely to preaching the word."

and was hence at their disposal, required more time and care than they could devote to it; and hence they requested the brethren to relieve them of this burden, by looking out from among themselves "seven men of HONEST report, full of the HOLY GHOST AND WISDOM, whom we," said the apostles, "may appoint over this business."

Mark these requisite qualifications. They were to be, 1. Men of *honest* report, that they might not be suspected of partiality, or as being actuated by a criminal selfishness, in taking charge of the temporalities of the church, and in their distribution among the dependent widows. 2. That they might be able ministers of the word of God, and thus assist the apostles also in the great work of saving souls, they were to be men *full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Surely this was a qualification not essential to enable them equitably to divide temporal goods merely among the poor, provided they were of *honest report* and of a sound judgment; but to enable them to understand and "rightly to divide the word of truth," so as to give "to every one his portion of meat in due season," it was necessary that they should have the "spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind."

Having devolved this duty upon the church, the apostles could now give themselves, "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." These men having been selected by the disciples, and "set before the apostles," when the latter "had prayed, they laid their *hands upon them*—thus consecrating them, according to the primitive custom, by PRAYER *and imposition of hands*, to the sacred work to which they had been, in this orderly and regular manner, chosen and called.

Among them thus set apart, were *Stephen* and *Philip*. And as evidence that they were included among the authorized expounders and preachers of God's word, in the very next chapter, we have an account of that most admirable, powerful, and pungent discourse which *Stephen*, being "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," delivered unto the Jews, in defence of that commission by virtue of which he "did great wonders and miracles among the people," ch. vi, 8. These mighty works, and this able defence, followed immediately after his consecration to the work of the ministry, and for doing which, he so enraged the Jews, that he fell under their revengeful disposition a martyr to the truth. However much, therefore, he might have devoted himself to the service of the poor widows "in the daily ministrations," he most assuredly fulfilled the ministry of the word as emphatically as did the apostles themselves; and it is no small proof of the orderly manner in which these first Christian ministers were inducted into their office by *prayer and imposition of hands*, before they ventured to show themselves as public advocates of God's truth, that we nowhere read of Stephen's preaching until after that ceremony had been performed upon him. He was first selected by the church, then approved by the apostles, and after that we read that, being "full of faith and power," he did great wonders and miracles among the people; vindicated his doctrine and conduct before his malevolent accusers—in doing which, he charged home upon their consciences their own unbelief and stubbornness—and finally sealed his powerful testimony with his own blood. A severe reproof this to those aspirants who take upon themselves this sacred work, not only independently of the constituted

authorities of the church, but sometimes in open contempt of their solemn advice to the contrary.

Another evidence in support of the fact that these primitive deacons were ministers of Jesus Christ, is found in *Philip*, who was another of the seven deacons mentioned in this passage. In chap. viii, 4, 5, we read that among those who "were scattered abroad" on account of the persecution which raged against the disciples at Jerusalem, and who "went everywhere preaching the word," *Philip* was included, and it is added, that he "went down to Samaria, and PREACHED Christ unto them." And as a proof that he also was commissioned by the Head of the church to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, it is recorded that "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For many unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." Here was a visible and an ocular demonstration that *Philip*, no less than *Stephen*, had been "endued with power from on high," and was fully commissioned, both by God and his church, to go forth into the world as his ambassador, and that he gave "full proof of his ministry" by the words which he spake, and the miracles which he wrought. And yet Philip was one of the deacons which had been set apart to "serve tables," so far as to distribute the bounties of the church to the suffering poor. What greater proof should we require that those deacons were regular preachers of God's word? Yet they were not elders or presbyters. They were, therefore, an inferior order in the ministry—which proves

that those err who confine themselves to one order only. This will appear farther manifest from consulting 1 Tim. iii, 1–13. In the first part of this chapter, the apostle is drawing the character and giving the qualifications of a *bishop*, *elder* or *presbyter*—most evidently using these as convertible terms, descriptive of either their order or office—and then proceeds to notice the characteristics of the *deacons* as another and distinct grade of ministers. This proves that they were not of the same order with the *elders*, but were inferior to them. That they were ministers of the word is manifest from what the apostle says, ver. 10–13. After telling Timothy that before a man is exalted to the office of a deacon, he must "first be proved," he adds, "they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness," (or great liberty of speech, as the words πολλην παρρασιαν may be rendered,) "in the faith which is in Jesus." Those deacons in the church who used their office well, as ministers of the word, thereby purchased to themselves a good degree, and had become fitted to the more exalted and responsible station of elder or bishop. They were now no longer obliged to attend, in connection with their office as preachers of the gospel, to the bodily wants of the poor, but they had the privilege of devoting themselves exclusively and entirely to the *spiritual* interests of the church. And thus we find, that Philip had so fulfilled his office as a deacon, that he became, as appears from several notices of him in the Acts of the Apostles, an itinerating evangelist. See chap. xxi, 8. These are the Scriptural authorities in favor of the opinion that the primitive deacons were preachers of God's word.

2. The writings of some of the primitive fathers sustain the same view of the character and office of these deacons. Thus *Polycarp* writes to the Philippians: "Let the *deacons* be blameless in his sight, as the *ministers* of God in Christ, and not of men; not evil speakers, nor double tongued, nor lovers of money; but compassionate, careful, diligent, temperate in all things, walking according to the truth of the Lord." Here the *deacons* are most evidently recognized as ministers of Jesus Christ, and not merely "of men," set apart for the purpose of serving tables only. Equally express are the words of *Ignatius*, who distinguishes between the order of *deacons* and *bishops*, without mentioning an intermediate order denominated *presbyters*. Writing to the Ephesians, he says, "Concerning my fellow-servant, *Burrahs*, according to the will of God, your *deacon*, I pray that he may remain to the honor of your *bishop*." And in his epistle to the Magnesians, after mentioning the *presbyters* and *bishops*, the latter as occupying an *official* standing over the former, to whom the general oversight of the church was intrusted, he says, "And your *deacons*, most dear to me, being intrusted with the *ministry* of Jesus Christ." In his epistle to the Trallians, he also most evidently recognizes them as an order of ministers. He says, "The *deacons* also, as being the *ministers* of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must, by all means, please all: for they are not the ministers of meat and drink, but of the church of God. Therefore, they must avoid all offences, as they would fire." To the Philadelphians, he remarks, "As concerning Philo, the *deacon* of Cilicia, he still *ministers* unto me in the *word of God*." To the Smyrnians, he uses the following language, which can be interpreted only as expressive of the same sentiment, namely, that

these *deacons* were truly and properly the ministers of Jesus Christ—"Ye have done well in that ye have received Philo and Rheus, who followed me for the *word of God*, the *deacons* of Christ our God."

To this opinion agrees that of Mosheim, who says, "The church was, undoubtedly, provided from the beginning with inferior *ministers* or *deacons*. No society can be without its servants, and still less such societies as those of the first Christians were. And it appears not only probable, but evident, that the *young men*, who carried away the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, were the *subordinate ministers* or *deacons* of the church at Jerusalem, who attended the apostles to execute their orders." This opinion concerning these *young men* being designated as such in their *official* character, the learned historian sustains in a very ingenious and solid manner, by a reference to several passages of sacred Scripture, which the reader may consult at his leisure.

From all these quotations, both from the word of God and the primitive fathers—as well as from Mosheim, who derived his opinion from the same sources—it appears most evident that those denominated *deacons*, were not mere lay members of the church, selected for the sole purpose of attending to its temporalities; but that they were regular ministers of the gospel, consecrated for that work by prayer and imposition of hands; and moreover, that they, as such, were authorized to administer the ordinance of baptism, and no doubt, also to assist in the distribution of the elements of the holy eucharist. Allowing the soundness of this conclusion, it will follow that those churches which admit of no distinction in ministerial order, but reduce all to a level, have departed from the

apostolic model. In their intemperate zeal against episcopacy, which broke out with such violence among the Independents of England in the days of the Stuarts, they seem to have run into the opposite extreme, by introducing a perfect parity of ministerial order, as well as of jurisdiction, and thus have impaired that beautiful symmetry which we behold in the orders, powers, and harmonious subordination of the several grades of officers in the primitive church.

It was said above that these deacons were authorized to administer the ordinance of baptism. This is evident from Acts viii, 12, where it is said that those who "believed Philip,"—one of the seven deacons who had been consecrated to this work by the apostles,—"preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, were BAPTIZED, both men and women." And that they were baptized by Philip, is inferrable from the fact that none of the apostles were present at the time, for we read in verse 14, "When the apostles HEARD that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." These young Samaritan converts were not therefore baptized by the apostles, but by Philip the deacon. In this same chapter, verse 26–29, we have an account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was also baptized by Philip, on his professing to "believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

It appears also from the Apology of Justin Martyr, that the deacons, under the direction of the bishop or chief administrator, after the act of consecration, distributed the bread and wine of the eucharist to the members of the church, and likewise carried it to

those who, by reason of sickness or infirmity, were not able to be present in their solemn assemblies.

It is doubtless from these authorities that the English, Protestant Episcopal, and Methodist Episcopal Churches, all of whom recognize this first order in the Christian ministry, have prescribed the following as the duties of a deacon:—

"It appertaineth to the office of a deacon to assist the elder in divine service. And especially, when he ministereth the holy communion, to help in the distribution thereof, and to read and expound the Holy Scriptures; to instruct the youth, and, in the absence of the elder, to baptize. And further, it is his office to search for the sick, poor, and impotent, that they may be visited and relieved."

And in that section of our discipline which speaks of the duties of a travelling deacon, it is said that he is, "1st. To baptize and perform the office of matrimony, in the absence of an elder. 2d. To assist the elder in administering the Lord's supper. 3d. To do all the duties of a travelling preacher."

This conformity, in respect to the prescribed duties of a deacon, to the foregoing authorities, must convince any one not biased by prejudice, that we have abundant authority for recognizing this order in the Christian ministry, as well as for the duties which are assigned him. If any more were necessary, it might be found in the uniform and undeviating practice of the church, from its establishment down to the period when conflicting opinions began to operate among the Protestants, who, in order to avoid as much as possible all the aspects of popery, laid aside many things which were most evidently sanctioned by the usages

of the primitive church, and, among others, that of travelling deacons in the church of God.

I will now endeavor to sum up the whole subject in a few words.

1. We have seen above, from St. Paul's instructions to Timothy, that a man must be *first proved* before he be put into the office of a deacon. To this inspired injunction it is our endeavor to conform. Whenever a young man thinks himself called of God to the ministry, among us, he receives a license, if thought worthy, from the authority of his brethren of the quarterly meeting conference,—having been first recommended by the class to which he belongs, or by a leaders' meeting, to exercise his gifts as a local preacher. If in this sphere he give satisfactory evidence of his call to, and qualification for this work, and he thinks it his duty to enter the travelling ministry, he makes application to an annual conference, by whom, if approved, he is received on trial, and by the presiding bishop is placed on a circuit under the oversight of a deacon or elder. In the meantime he is directed to a course of reading and study suited to a candidate for the ministry. After having pursued this course for two years, studying and preaching, and performing the other duties of a travelling preacher, if then approved by his brethren, he is received as a member of an annual conference, elected and ordained a deacon. In this way he is *proved* for two years. If he still persevere in his work, *using the office of a deacon well,* for two years more, he is considered to have *purchased to himself a good degree* in the ministry, and may be elected and ordained an elder.

2. In the foregoing numbers, we have seen that the order of elders, bishops, or presbyters, existed in

the primitive church, to whom, under the general superintendence of the apostles and evangelists, the principal government of the church was committed. I need hardly inform the reader that this order of ministers is recognized in our church, and that to them is committed, under a similar oversight, the chief government of the church.

3. We have also seen that from among this order of ministers there were selected those to whom, on some occasions, a special and more extended jurisdiction was given. So also on our circuits, a special oversight is given to one of our elders, and on districts a more extended jurisdiction is intrusted to an elder, without creating either the one or the other into a higher order. For the time being he has an *official* jurisdiction over men of the *same order* and rank in the ministry, both travelling and local, as well as over the people generally. Here is an illustration of the primitive usage which led to the promiscuous application of the terms presbyter, bishop, president, and senior, to the same order of ministers.

4. In the primitive days, it has appeared evident that over the whole church the apostles, and in their absence, as well as after their death, the itinerating evangelists, exercised a general jurisdiction over the whole church—though whether they were consecrated a third time for this special service, is more than we have been able to prove. This special oversight and more extended jurisdiction we see exemplified in those officers in our church whom we denominate, for distinction's sake, *bishops* or *superintendents:* and though they are consecrated especially for this service, and, as we believe, exert a beneficial influence over the entire body, we do not think the order

essential to the existence and integrity of a true church of Christ.

With this brief analysis of the orders and functions of our ministry, together with its analogy to the primitive organization and government, the whole subject is submitted to the calm consideration of the reader. If, after weighing the preceding testimonies and arguments in favor of the order and organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he shall think it is allowable on Scriptural ground, let him pray the Father of lights to send down upon us more abundantly of his Holy Spirit, that the work of salvation may be carried on by this instrumentality, to the ends of the earth. If, on the other hand, after a prayerful examination he shall think that we are in error, let him labor, in the spirit of brotherly love, to convince us, and he shall receive our thanks, and an effort shall be made to rectify whatever may be found amiss either in theory or practice.

NUMBER XXV

Mr. Wesley fully justified in his proceedings—Evangelical light increased and increasing—Apology for the discussion—Confirmation as practised in the Protestant Episcopal Church not Scriptural—Those Scriptures examined which speak of confirmation—An appendage of baptism, proved, first from Scripture, secondly, from the fathers—True doctrine of confirmation explained—A third order not inferrable from confirmation—Spiritual regeneration essential—Dangerous tendency of confirmation as practised in the Protestant Episcopal Church.

ENOUGH has been said to justify Mr. Wesley, and those associated with him, in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. And until the testimony which has been adduced shall be set aside as

incompetent to support the postulatum which has been assumed as true, and the arguments derived therefrom are shown to be inconclusive, we shall rest in the hope that no dogmatical assertions will hereafter frighten weak minds from their hold of truth, or furnish the selfish with an apology for a gratification of their ruling propensity.

That evangelical light and truth, and that "love which casteth out fear," have much increased, and are still increasing in the Protestant Episcopal Church, is a truth which I delight to acknowledge; and if I have any prepossessions in favor of any one denomination more than another, they preponderate toward them, always excepting, as a matter of course, our own. This being the fact, it has been with no little reluctance that I have felt myself impelled from a regard to truth, and to the injured rights of a large denomination of Christians, to enter into this discussion, in order to maintain what I believe to be their privileges and immunities, as one of the branches of the church of Jesus Christ. I could, therefore, have no wish, nurtured and educated as I was in my youth in the bosom of that Church, and still retaining a grateful remembrance of the early lessons received from her catechism, and an attendance upon her worship, to lay aught to her charge which would, in the least degree, weaken her influence in community, or retard her progress in the career of usefulness. Having, however, overcome some of the prejudices of education, and been providentially led, as I humbly trust, to another communion, which appears to hold up a clearer and more steady light, and to exhibit in its modes of operation a greater conformity to primitive usages,—when I have seen this communion assailed

in the manner before noticed, I have felt it an imperious duty to exert my feeble powers in its defence. The *manner* in which this has been done, is before the reader, and the *result* is left, without any of that anxiety which arises from *doubtful* disputations, to Him in whose hands are the destinies of all men, and who knows how to make allowances for human frailty.

These remarks are to be considered merely prefatory, or if the reader please, apologetic, of what I am now about to say of some usages in the Protestant Episcopal Church, which are considered unscriptural, and therefore an evidence of their departure, in these respects, from the *original* church of Christ. And the first I shall mention is that of CONFIRMATION, as held and practised by that church. But I should not mention even this, had not Dr. Chapman, who seems to be considered the modern champion for the defence of their peculiarities, brought this forward with such prominence and boldness in his discourses. As he has, however, attempted its justification on Scriptural grounds, my first business is to examine those texts on which he rests its support.

That we may ascertain whether his references to Scripture authority are appositely applied in support of the doctrine and practice of confirmation, as now exemplified in the Protestant Episcopal Church, we must inquire in the first place, how this is held and practised in this church. Let it be recollected then, that persons are confirmed at from the age of twelve to twenty or more years, who had received the ordinance of baptism in infancy, or perhaps some years previously to their receiving the rite of confirmation :— that this rite is performed by a diocesan bishop only ;— that in submitting to it, the person takes upon himself

the responsibility of discharging the obligation of those vows made for him by his sponsors in baptism;—and that he is now pronounced to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and is entitled to all the privileges of the Christian Church. This is *confirmation* as administered in the Protestant Episcopal Church. And it is this rite, thus administered, that Dr. Chapman undertakes to defend by an appeal to the sacred Scriptures.

Now, I take it upon me to affirm that there is not a single text in the sacred Scriptures, nor a single passage in the writings of the primitive fathers of the first three centuries, which support this practice. Observe:—I do not say that *confirmation* was not practised, even by the apostles and their successors; but I say that the confirmation practised by them was as unlike this advocated by Dr. Chapman, as the administration of *crism*, or *extreme unction*, is to the true Scriptural baptism;—that so far from its being delayed until some years after the subject of it was baptized, it was administered *at the time of* baptism, and was considered as an essential appendage of the baptismal rite, so much so that the latter was considered incomplete without it.

Let us see if this be not correct. And that we may not do injustice to Dr. C. and his admirers, some of whom, from the boldness of his assumptions I think it must principally arise, seem to think him invulnerable, let us examine the texts of Scripture on which he relies. The first passage he quotes is, Heb. vi, 1, 2, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism,

and of LAYING ON OF HANDS." From this text, so obviously intended to show that the *laying on of hands* was closely connected with the ordinance of baptism, Dr. C. infers the scripturality of the right of confirmation, as practised in his church--that is, a separate and distinct rite performed years after the subject was baptized! Such a blinding influence does a preconceived theory have upon a mind otherwise enlightened, and under the dictates of a heart seasoned with sincerity. Now that the apostles spoke of that sort of *laying on of hands* which usually accompanied or immediately succeeded the administration of baptism, will appear indisputably manifest from other passages of Scripture, where the ceremony is alluded to. And as a "diamond best cuts a diamond," so Scripture is its own best interpreter.

The next passage quoted in proof of this theory is, Acts viii, 14–17, "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God," through the preaching of Philip, ver. 5, "they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they came down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen on none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Now it is very manifest from this text and its connection, that the *laying on of the hands* of the apostles followed soon after baptism, and was accompanied by the gift of the Holy Ghost; and not on persons who had been baptized in their infancy, and had been educated and previously prepared by a long course of instructions, as is done by those who are confirmed in the Protestant Episcopal Church, for the reception

of this rite. Does this church really believe that all those persons *receive the Holy Spirit*, on whom the bishop's hands are laid in confirmation? Were many of those asked the question, would they not in all likelihood answer, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?"

But we have a more direct and palpable proof of the correctness of this view of the subject in Acts xix, 1–6: in the last two verses it is said, "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied." Here it is evident that the act of confirmation immediately succeeded the ceremony of baptism, which has no more resemblance to the ceremonies of confirmation now in use, than confirmation has to consecration; and yet this is one of the texts on which Dr. Chapman relies for proof of his doctrine on this subject!

That this apostolic practice was and should be continued in the church, is not doubted. Indeed, I consider baptism but half performed, unless the application of water to the body be followed by the imposition of hands and prayer, that the blessing of the Holy Spirit may descend upon the subject of this holy ordinance. And yet no man can prove that it was the practice of the apostles, nor of any of their successors in the church, for the three first centuries, that confirmation was administered to the candidates for admission into the communion of the faithful only in connection with baptism, unless it were to those on whom it had been neglected at the proper time, as was the case with those at Samaria; and then, as in that instance, it was followed as soon thereafter as practicable.

That we may be convinced of this, let us hear some of the first fathers of the church in reference to this subject. Cyprian, having referred to those of Samaria for a justification of the practice of laying on of hands, says,—

"In the second creation, God first prepares the man, before he gives his Spirit: he first makes a man a fit temple for the Holy Ghost. Now the way by which a man is prepared and fitted, is by baptism, by which he is cleansed and purged from sin,* and fitted for the reception of the Spirit of God, in which respect he is to be regarded as a body. The way by which the Holy Ghost is infused, which as a living soul must actuate and direct that prepared body, is by prayer and imposition of hands, or by confirmation." Here is nothing said, nor even intimated, about any other preparation for imposition of hands than baptism; and as all must allow that it is extremely de-

* I do not vouch for the correctness of these sentiments of Cyprian respecting the efficacy of baptism. It certainly should not be considered any thing more than a divinely appointed means of grace, which, when rightly administered, is accompanied, as all duties are, with God's blessing. It is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh"—it is not to be considered in the light of a common washing, resorted to for the cleansing of the body, "but the answer of a good conscience"—it has a *moral* or spiritual influence upon the mind when done in obedience to God's command, in the *spirit* of his requirement.

The fact is, when Cyprian wrote, which was in the third century, too much stress was laid upon outward ceremonies, and hence the strong, and, as I think, unscriptural saying in the text, *that baptism cleanses and purges the soul from sin.* Though we ought not to doubt that, when rightly administered, it is always accompanied with God's blessing, yet it should be considered only as a means, in the use of which we are to look for the "inward and spiritual grace," prefigured by this outward rite, which is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God.

sirable that whenever a person is prepared for the reception of so great a blessing as that of the Holy Spirit, he should receive it without delay, are we to suppose that they were in the habit of waiting for years before they were thus confirmed by the laying on of hands? The thing is absurd in itself. Nothing, therefore, is more manifest, even from this quotation itself, than that the laying on of hands and prayer followed in consecutive order the ordinance of baptism.

But we have a more direct and irrefragable proof that this is the true sense in which we are to understand this subject, in the words of *Tertullian.* He says—

"As *soon* as we come out of the baptismal laver, we are anointed, and then are *confirmed.*" This must set the matter at rest with all those who confide in the testimony of Scripture, and of the Greek and Latin fathers here quoted.

Indeed the very fact, that they supposed the graces of the Holy Spirit were not communicated until by "prayer and imposition of hands," refutes the absurd notion that this manner of blessing the young converts was delayed for years: for this would be to leave them graceless, under the power of sin, and out of the pale of the Church. So Ambrose, bishop of Milan, says, "By imposition of hands, it is believed, the Spirit may be received, which is wont to be done after baptism, by the bishop, for the confirmation of unity in the Church." Do you not see how closely he connects the imposition of hands with baptism? There can, therefore, be no doubt, that the laying on of hands immediately succeeded the administration of baptism, and that the person was not considered as completely initiated into the Church, unless this were

done; and hence, as I before said, the ceremony of baptism in itself is but half performed, unless it be followed by imposition of hands and prayers.

In the early age of Christianity, those who were converted from Paganism, were brought into the Church through the initiating rite of baptism, and in order to its proper and complete administration, the application of water to the body in the name of the holy Trinity, was immediately followed with the imposition of the hands of the administrator, and prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And as there were heathen who had not received the ordinance in childhood, they received it now in an adult age. Hence the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles, of the baptism of those who were converted to the faith, and of their receiving the Holy Spirit, by prayer and imposition of the hands of the Apostles.

But Dr. Chapman thinks that because we read in the above extracts that hands were laid on those converts by the apostles and bishops, therefore none but diocesan bishops have the right of administering confirmation, and hence also he infers the divine right of episcopacy, and the exclusive right of confirmation in a third order. It is truly surprising with what facility a man imposes upon himself whenever he makes his theory a key to unlock the meaning of Scripture, and an interpreter of ancient writings, instead of bringing his theory to these tests in order to try its strength and solidity.

The truth is, that whoever administered baptism, if he performed his whole duty, administered also confirmation at the same time; for they were not considered as two separate rites, performed at two separate seasons, but one and the same, the laying on of hands

and prayer following in consecutive order the rite of baptism. "But apostles and bishops laid on hands." Truly; but do you not know that at first apostles did the work of bishops, and even of deacons, until they were relieved by an increase of laborers, and then that bishops and presbyters were of the same order until the *usurpation* already noticed? This has been irrefutably proved. Well then—presbyters baptized, confirmed, and ordained, and did all other things pertaining to their office as bishops or overseers of the flock of Christ.

It is therefore perfectly absurd to suppose that because it is said that a bishop laid hands on the young converts, therefore this rite was performed exclusively by a third order of the ministry. This is nothing more than what logicians call *petitio principii*, the begging the question, a taking for granted what has never been proved. The quotations already made, both from the sacred Scriptures and the early fathers, prove that he who baptized confirmed at the same time; and it is perfectly absurd to suppose the contrary; for if imposition of hands and prayer were considered necessary to make the ceremony of baptism itself complete, then it follows inevitably that he who did the one must also do the other, otherwise he left his work imperfect.

If there be any truth in these remarks, it will follow that confirmation as now administered in the Protestant Episcopal Church is unscriptural, and contrary to the usages of the primitive Church for the first three hundred years. In the first place, allowing infant baptism to be Scriptural, as we both do, if the laying on of hands accompanied this ordinance, as it unquestionably did, then whenever it is rightly admi-

nistered, it need not be repeated when the person comes to mature age, because the Scriptural confirmation has been already bestowed upon him. Secondly, if adults are converted to God who had not before been baptized, they should, at their conversion, receive the ordinance, and be dismissed by prayer and imposition of hands; and thus the repetition of it at a future time is rendered unnecessary. In either way, therefore, the confirmation service, as now practised by that church, is an unscriptural requisition, contrary to primitive custom; and hence, in this particular, in retaining this relic of Romish superstition, they have departed from the original Church of Christ.

It is, nevertheless, contended that Paul and Barnabas went to "Lystra and Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples." Truly—but how did they confirm them? Why, by "exhorting them to continue in the faith," and assuring them "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." This indeed is the most effectual way to confirm believers in the doctrines of Jesus Christ, by exhorting them to steadfastness in the faith, and to diligence in their several duties, and teaching them to look to God by prayerful and believing hearts for the gift of the Holy Spirit, without whose aid and influence nothing great or strong can be effected.

It is thought, moreover, that the manner in which confirmation is administered in the Protestant Episcopal Church, has a very dangerous tendency. Such as are thus confirmed are pronounced regenerated, and consequently are considered in a state of salvation. If this were so in fact, the administration of the rite would be most salutary, as it would indeed confirm their souls in the faith of the Gospel, and bring

them under more solemn obligations to fidelity to the precepts of Christianity. But as we have reason to believe that most of those who receive the ordinance are strangers to the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, they must of necessity be built up in a deceptive hope, and confirmed in a delusive dream of spiritual attainments and enjoyments. Is it not much more safe, as it is certainly more Scriptural, for those who were baptized in infancy to give evidence, on a confession of faith, of the soundness of their conversion, before they are received into the church, and then let them be confirmed by exhorting them to continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread?" And as to those who were not baptized in infancy, but became truly converted to God in adult age, let them receive the Scriptural baptism and confirmation by the application of water in the name of the Holy Trinity, and by prayer and imposition of hands for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This was unquestionably the primitive practice, and therefore should be continued in the church.

Without this inward grace, this constant working of the Holy Spirit, outward ceremonies, whether of baptism, confirmation, or partaking of the holy communion, are like the dried channels of the river to a thirsty man—they yield him no *refreshing seasons from the presence of the Lord.* But when accompanied by this Spirit, they are like the "upper and nether springs," and by partaking of them the believer's soul becomes like a "watered garden, whose waters fail not."

NUMBER XXVI.

Laying on of hands customary on sundry occasions—Forms of prayer not Scriptural—Use of the Lord's Prayer—Origen's account of it—Cyprian's—Tertullian's—Justin Martyr's—No set forms prescribed—Evident from scarcity of books—Art of printing not known—Not apostolical—All forms not condemned—Holy Spirit more important—Saying *Amen* Scriptural—Proved from 1 Cor. xiv, 16, and from Justin Martyr—Modesty and humility should accompany us to the throne of grace—Spirit of prayer may exist either with or without a form—Boisterous expressions and boldness of manner condemned.

It would be an easy matter to show that laying on of hands was a ceremony used both by the Jews and Christians, whenever a person was designated for any particular work, or was especially consecrated to God. But as this must be evident to every reader of the Bible, it seems unnecessary to spend time in its proof. From this ancient custom among the Jews, doubtless originated the practice of confirming those who were consecrated to God in baptism, by the imposition of hands and prayer. Indeed, it appears evident that whenever a lapsed person, who had been excommunicated from the church for any crime, on his giving evidence of penitence, was restored, the officiating minister laid his hands upon him again, and prayed that he might receive the Holy Spirit, to enable him to stand fast in the faith. But that this confirmation was according to any prescribed form is more than can be proved from any part of Scripture, or from any of the fathers of the church. It was done as a token of the reconciliation of the church to the restored offender, and from the fulness of the heart breathing out its desires to God that his Holy Spirit might accompany his re-union with his brethren, and

that he should not again disgrace his profession by any act of apostacy.

I come next to inquire whether the Protestant Episcopal Church have any authority from sacred Scripture, or from the writers in those primitive times, for tying themselves down to *prescribed forms of prayer?* Now I venture to affirm that no other form of prayer was prescribed either in the sacred Scriptures, or by any writer in the church during the first three centuries, than the Lord's Prayer, and that even this was used only occasionally; for it is evident that they never understood—if we may infer the understanding of this matter from their practice—the direction of our Saviour respecting the use of this prayer, as implying any more than a general model for prayer—"After this manner pray ye," &c. That they did frequently use this inimitable form of prayer in their assemblies, which, for comprehensiveness of matter, beauty of diction, and fervency of spirit, stands unrivalled among all the prayers ever indited, is manifest from several passages, although it is equally evident that it was not expressly prescribed, so as to make it obligatory at all times. The following quotations will sustain this assertion:—

Origen saith, "Christ gave us a prayer, with which he commanded us to pray unto the Father." *Tertullian* writes, "That our Lord Jesus Christ gave to his disciples a new form of prayer." But *Cyprian* is more full than either of the former in reference to this point. He says,—

"Christ hath given us a form of prayer, and hath admonished and instructed us what we should pray for. He hath made us live, hath taught us to pray, that while we offer to the Father the prayer which

the Son taught, we may be the more easily heard. For what prayer can be more Scriptural than that which was given us by Christ, who gave us also the Holy Spirit? And what prayer can be more prevalent with God, than that of his Son, who is the truth proceeding out of his mouth? So that to pray otherwise than he hath taught, is both ignorance and impiety. Let us pray, therefore, dearly beloved brethren, as God our Master hath taught us: it is a friendly and familiar prayer to ask God with his own, and to present the prayer of Christ to his ears; the Father will acknowledge his Son's words. When we pray, let him that dwells in the heart be in the voice; and since we have him an Advocate with the Father for our sins, when we beg pardon for our sins, let us use the words of our Advocate; and since he says, that whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in his name, he will give it unto us; how much more efficaciously shall we prevail for what we beg in Christ's name, if we ask it in his prayer."

Tertullian pronounces the following eulogy on this prayer:—"In the compendium of a few words, how many declarations of prophets, evangelists, and apostles; how many speeches, parables, examples, and precepts are contained! How many duties toward God! Honor to God in the preface, faith in the first petition, hope in the second, resignation in the third, petition for life in the fourth, confession of sins in the fifth, watchfulness against temptations in the sixth. What wonder! God alone could teach how he would be prayed to."

While these extracts show that they did use, at least occasionally, this form of prayer, yet it is manifest that they neither confined themselves to it, nor

used other prescribed forms in its place; but that they added others from the fulness of their own hearts,—wants, times, and circumstances dictating the nature and form of their petitions and intercessions. So says *Tertullian* immediately after he had finished the above eulogy upon the Lord's prayer:—"That we may add thereunto, and offer up prayers unto God according to the variety of our circumstances and condition." These words certainly are not indicative of their having had prescribed forms of prayer, from which they were not allowed to deviate. This is farther manifest from the following extract from the same writer:—

"We may add thereunto; for since the Lord, the observer of all human necessities, has in another place, after he had delivered this prayer, said, *Ask, and ye shall receive;* and every one has particular circumstances to beg for; therefore, having premised the lawful and ordinary prayer, there is place for accidental requests, and a liberty of offering up other petitions, so as they do agree with the precepts: as far as we are from the precepts, so far are we from God's ears; the remembrance of the precepts makes way for our prayers to heaven, of which it is the chief."

These "accidental requests" arose out of the circumstances in which they were placed, the particular dangers to which they were exposed, the trials with which they had to struggle, and the particular blessings they needed, and which God had promised, and to which no prescribed forms could be suited. What form of prayer is it to be supposed the penitent persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, used, when in Damascus it was said of him, "Behold, he prayeth?" Such a form only as his heart dictated—or, rather, such as the

Holy Spirit dictated, when it made "intercession for him with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Justin Martyr, speaking of the prayer which was offered to God in the celebration of the Lord's supper, says, "That the bishop sent up prayers and praises to God, with his *utmost ability*;" plainly indicating that his prayers and praises were the offspring of his own heart, under the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit.

That they used no prescribed forms of prayer is farther evident from what Origen says in respect to the posture of the prayer, namely, lifting up their eyes and hands to heaven, and closing their eyes. Hear him in his comment upon the words of our Saviour, in Matt. vi, 5: *And when thou prayest*, &c. "But he that is no hypocrite, enters into the closet of his heart, to the riches that are treasured up there, and shutting himself in amongst those treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and not fixing his eyes on external objects, as looking after any thing without, and closing every gate of the senses, lest he should be drawn aside by them, and their species or fancies should creep into his mind, he prays to the Father, who never flies from, or leaves such a one, but, together with the Son, dwells in him." In another place he says, "Closing the eyes of his senses, but exerting those of his mind." How could such read prayers from a book!

There is another insurmountable difficulty in the way of our believing that the primitive Christians used forms of prayer in their congregations, or in their more private devotions. Books were exceedingly scarce, and the art of printing was not known. All the books therefore which they had were confined to

a few manuscript copies, which were generally deposited in the churches, and these were chiefly copies of the Holy Scriptures, which were read and expounded by those who led their devotions. It was indeed utterly impracticable for them to have forms of prayer put into the hands of the people, suited to the various exigencies in which they might be placed. This fact, together with the expressions found in the above extracts respecting entering into the "closet of our hearts," "shutting our eyes," and making "accidental requests," authorizes the conclusion that they were strangers to prescribed forms of prayer. Hence in this particular the Protestant Episcopal Church have departed from primitive usage.

What would an apostle have thought, could he have heard one of the itinerating evangelists affirm, that, to lay aside the use of the Prayer Book, and to substitute our own effusions in place of prescribed forms, was to perjure one's self? And yet such astounding declarations have been heard from the lips of a late bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Indeed, if my information does not deceive me, many of the clergy of that church have felt themselves much straitened by being tied down so rigidly to their forms, that they dare hardly utter an extemporaneous prayer, for fear of incurring the displeasure of their diocesan. Is this Scriptural? Is it according to primitive usage? I think not.

I do not, indeed, condemn all forms of prayer. And as to those in use in the church of which I am speaking, I believe they have one of the most unexceptionable liturgies in the world—the prayers breathing a fervency of devotion, in language at once Scriptural, experimental, and spiritual, which none

but a truly regenerated man can feelingly and believingly use. The hypocrite and dull formalist, in the use of these prayers, must incur the fearful responsibility of adding a solemn mockery to his other sins. Yet, those who so strenuously contend for apostolic precept and practice in vindication of their usages, and so roundly condemn others who dissent from them on a point so dubious as that of apostolic succession, should be careful to fortify themselves against assailants, with something more substantial than merely modern usage, and allowance of the Scriptural language of their prayers; and more especially to justify the denunciatory language which is adopted towards those who may think it a privilege to "close their eyes against all outward things," and to lift up their souls in prayer and praise under the dictates of a heart swelling with gratitude, or heaving with intense desire, without the promptings of a prayer book.

It is most assuredly of vastly more consequence to have the heart prepared by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, and to keep the mind in the frame of unceasing prayer, than it is either to commit a well-digested prayer to memory, or to repeat one over with dull emphasis from a book. Those, indeed, must be in a sad plight who, on any unexpected emergency, such as sudden danger, violent temptation, or in time of sickness, can no otherwise pray than as they are directed by a prescribed form. I allow, that a truly spiritual man may pray acceptably to God, either with or without a form; and that, in many cases, where such a form may be written as shall always be suitable, such as baptism, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and consecration of ministers, prayers may be prescribed more suitable than an ordinary man could

well dictate spontaneously; but to confine every public administrator of God's word to the habitual use of particular forms of prayer for every occasion, in all circumstances, and make him obnoxious to ecclesiastical censure if he presume to depart from them, is a usurpation of power over the consciences of men, and an exercise of unscriptural authority over their Christian liberties. It was unknown to the primitive church, and therefore should not be imposed upon men as an indispensable duty.

It is manifest from numerous testimonies, that it was the custom of the primitive Christian assemblies to follow the prayers of the minister with the responsive *amen*, thereby intimating their assent to the petitions, and their hearty wish that so it might be. The Scripture authority for this practice is found in 1 Cor. xiv, 16: "Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say AMEN, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest." This text, while it condemns the practice of the Romish Church in offering up prayers in a tongue unknown to the people, fully justifies the practice of those congregations who are in the habit of accompanying their ministers in prayer, and expressing their sincere wish for an answer by a hearty *amen*—which means, *so be it.* And that the primitive Christians so understood it, and practised accordingly, we have evidence in the following extracts:—

Justin Martyr, speaking of the celebration of the eucharist, saith, "The bishop makes a long prayer over the elements, and when he ends all the people present give their approbation by saying *amen.* And when the elements are blessed by the minister's prayer,

and the people have approved it by saying amen, then they are distributed."

Now, though these passages justify the practice of the people's expressing their approbation by a loud "amen" at the conclusion of the prayer, there is no authority for commingling of prayer, by the alternate voice of the minister and people, as is done in some portions of the public service of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Thus much on the subject of forms of prayer. And let it not be thought that these strictures arise from a captious spirit; I have not so much of a disposition to find fault with others, as I have to defend our own rules and usages. If they judge it most conducive to the practice of piety, and to the diffusion of pure religion, to read prayers in the congregation, let them do it; but do not let them plead that they have the authority of Scripture and primitive usage for imposing this upon their ministers and people as an indispensable obligation. And if they are so happy as to *feel* the workings of that Holy Spirit, after which they so frequently seek in their prayers, and to exemplify those heavenly principles inculcated in their religious formularies, they will not rise in opposition to others who are striving after the same Spirit, and endeavoring to promulgate the same principles. But, in the mean time, let them remember that in this particular also they have departed from the practice of the *original* church of Christ, and that the necessity of adhering to it implies a destitution, in some measure, at least, of that fervency of devotion, and that spiritual communion with God, by which the primitive disciples were distinguished. A man who is conscious of his wants fails not to find appropriate language to

express them. And though a heated imagination may lead a man to a wild and incoherent manner of expression, incompatible with the modesty and diffidence which become a fallible and dependent being in his addresses to the throne of grace; yet, under the ordinary influences of the divine Spirit, which every true Christian enjoys, a sober judgment will guide him to that humbleness of manner and suitableness of expression which will tend to his own and to the edification of others. It is said, indeed, by Cyprian, that the prayer of the minister was "pronounced with a modest and bashful voice," which is, I apprehend, far removed from that loud and boisterous manner adopted by those who seem to think their success in prayer will be in exact proportion to the length and loudness of their petitions. Hannah's prayer was heard and answered, though expressed in a whisper. And though St. Cyprian says, that our "petitions should be sent up to God with most fervent prayers, with tears, and cries, and groans," yet he evidently and most justly condemns that boisterous manner which a wild enthusiasm substitutes for the exercise of faith and humility, and which disgusts the well-informed more than it edifies any.

Fervency of spirit, therefore, accompanied with modesty of manner, with humility of mind, and a reliance upon the promises of God in Christ Jesus, will render prayer acceptable, whether it be made with or without a form.

NUMBER XXVII.

Conventions of the Protestant Episcopal Church—How formed—Gentlemen not church members sent to them—This unscriptural and pernicious—Bishop White's opinion—Theatrical amusements allowed to members of that church—Bishop White's opinion—Censurable—Sad predicament of the church—Demoralizing effects of theatres—No such practice allowed in the primitive church.

HAVING shown that the rite of confirmation, as administered by the Protestant Episcopal Church, and a prescribed form of prayer, to which the minister must confine himself, are neither supported by Scripture nor sanctioned from primitive usage, I come now to speak of some other things which appear to me equally unscriptural, and, therefore, not according to the original practice of the church. The first to which I would call attention, is the manner in which their conventions are constituted. These are made up of an equal number of lay and clerical delegates. Though I can find nothing in the early writings of the church to justify thus committing ecclesiastical affairs to the government of such a mixed representation, yet it is not to the practice itself that I object, but it is to the allowing gentlemen, not members of the church at all, but mere pew-holders, to become the legislators in spiritual matters. This is committing those spiritual affairs which involve the everlasting interests of mankind into the hands of men who know not God, who do not profess religion, are not even members of the visible church. Is such a practice sanctioned either by Scriptural usage or by the fitness of things?

The Apostle Paul censured the Corinthians for calling in the aid of those from without the church, to

judge of temporal matters, and settle disputes. But this practice is tolerable, in comparison to committing the most weighty concerns of the church into the hands of men who do not even profess religion, and who, though they may have the "form of godliness, deny the power thereof." The vote of such a person may turn the scale against the judgment of a house of bishops, and all the clerical delegates which compose the lower house, even on a point of the highest importance to the well-being and prosperity of the church. I doubt whether this practice can be justified by any precedent in the acts of the church, either in scriptural or primitive times, until after it was wedded to the state, and received its laws from civil legislators.

And how does this practice quadrate with the doctrine of apostolic succession, and that independence of the clerical character which such a doctrine would seem to sanction? Here is a convention of apostolic successors solemnly convened for the purpose of deliberating on the affairs of the church, so organized by the introduction of laymen under no religious profession, not even members of a church that allows of balls and theatres, into its councils, that these gentlemen may, by their votes, frustrate all their good designs, control the deliberations of grave apostolic successors, whose heads are adorned with episcopal mitres! Would St. Paul have submitted to this? Is not this mingling worldly policy too much with the councils of the church, and thereby conforming to the temper and practice of mere political assemblies? And does not Bishop White, in the extract which follows, admit that this was submitted to at first for the purpose of enlisting the influence of such men in their

favor? And what is this but allowing that a *gain may be made of godliness*, and that it was necessary —the necessity arising from the sparsity of spiritual men—in order to build up their community?

Is this practice in conformity to the usage of the original church of Christ? Do you think that the apostles resorted to a similar practice, in order to enlarge the boundaries of the Christian church, and to extend the circumference of their influence? Did not St. Paul rather *openly rebuke* St. Peter, for seeming to lean toward this worldly policy to avoid reproach? It is to be hoped that the Protestant Episcopal Church will soon rid itself of this encumbrance, by incorporating in their highest councils none but such as give evidence that they are "no reprobates," *by* their "having the Spirit of Christ."

The following are Bishop White's remarks in reference to this subject. It seems that at the convention of that church, which is held triennially, in 1833, a communication was received from the Rev. Philander Chase, bishop of Ohio, embracing several topics, among which was this of admitting non-professors of religion to be delegates of the conventions. This communication was referred to Bishop White for an answer; and the following are his remarks on this point:—

"The answer to this was, the decided opinion that none but communicants should be sent: but whether it would not be too strong an act of government, and may not be left to advice and persuasion, and of even these to be governed by fitness of character in other respects, may be made a question. When we organized our church the proposal of such a measure would have stopped us at the threshold. Whether

we are now ripe for it, should be well considered before we make the attempt. One great discouragement is the direction given to the public mind by the use made of the same test in England. Among us it has been gone into in one diocese only, and was subsequently abandoned. Should any diocese again undertake the matter, they would seem to be competent."

It would seem, therefore, that the practice, in the opinion of the bishop, was somewhat reluctantly submitted to at first, and continued as a matter of expediency; for he asserts that "none but communicants *ought* to be sent." So that I am borne out in my opinion by the judgment of Bishop White, that the practice is wrong in itself, and therefore should not be tolerated, except as a necessary evil to be thrown off as soon as possible.

May we not suppose that it is from this cause that that church has found it so difficult to debar its members from attending upon the common amusements of the day? It is well known that several attempts have been made in their conventions to make it a term of church communion that their members should refrain from attending theatrical representations; but that such has been the strong bias in their favor, hitherto they have been unable to carry such a measure into execution. This subject, it seems, was referred to in the above-mentioned communication of Bishop Chase, and the following is Bishop White's answer:—

"The next point introduced, was that of theatrical entertainments; in respect to which the answerer took occasion to develope his sentiments. They are, that the theatre, as it always has been, and is likely to be always conducted, has a general tendency to corrupt the morals; not only because of profane and indecent

words and sentiments in some plays, but because vice is often insidiously set off to advantage, by its being associated with agreeable and even estimable qualities. Still, we cannot affirm that there is sin in the introducing of fictitious characters, for a display of sentiments strictly moral and instructive: for which reason it would seem improper in a clergyman, as was the object of the proposal, to repel from the communion, for being present at a play not containing any thing contrary to religion or morals. If it should be urged that the stage is sometimes so abused, as has been admitted, it is an argument which may be transferred to the pulpit; because of some discourses from it very dangerous to the consciences of the hearers; if not in some respects, yet in some others. If a communicant should knowingly be present at an exhibition sanctioning vice, it is another matter, and might justly be made a ground of exclusion." (See Bishop White's Memoirs, page 248.)

These appear to me the most exceptionable of all the sentiments ever uttered by Bishop White. Though he gives it as his opinion that the manner in which theatres are attended renders them injurious to piety and morals, yet he thinks that they are not evils in themselves, but may be innocent, and that therefore the good or evil resulting from frequenting them must be determined by what is transacted. Allowing the truth of this statement, do you not see to what a dilemma it reduces the church? In the first place, before a person can safely determine on the lawfulness or propriety of attending to a theatrical representation, he must either read it over himself, or rely upon the judgment of some one else who has acquainted himself with its merits; or, if neither of these

be done, he must go and see and hear for himself, and then determine upon its character; and would not either of these be a dangerous experiment?

Look, moreover, at the predicament of the administrator of discipline. If he presume to call a member of the church to an account for frequenting the theatre, he must, in order to decide correctly upon the merits of the case, produce witnesses to ascertain the moral or immoral character of the play. To enable them to testify intelligibly, they must have been present to witness the exhibition. And how many would be thus willing to expose, and, perhaps, to criminate themselves, in giving testimony for or against others? And then the diversity of judgments in respect to the morality or immorality of the exhibition! Who should finally decide in these dubious points? Must not an endless perplexity follow such casuistry as this?

Now, I cannot but think that a church which reduces itself to such a dilemma, must be in very straitened circumstances. Not only in straitened circumstances, but also in a very low state as it respects its morals and spirituality. As the stage is now conducted, with all its attendant circumstances, do we hazard any thing in saying that it unavoidably and necessarily corrupts the morals of youth, vitiates the mind, debases the passions, and is therefore the very purlieu of destruction? Can there be a more direct road to perdition? Is it not a well-known fact that our theatres are generally surrounded with houses of ill fame, with grog-shops, and with every temptation to vicious indulgence which can possibly be invented to ensnare the youthful heart, to palsy genius, to poison the blood, to brutalize the moral nature of man, and to drown the soul in the sea of pollution?

And shall an original church of Christ fear to lift up its voice in reprobation of an amusement pregnant with such evils—so prolific of its thousands of untold miseries? Should it not, indeed, speak in tones of thunder, as well as with the voice of tender and maternal warning, against standing upon a precipice so steep and slippery, and which leads to a gulf so deep and wide?

Surely a church that fears to do this, however canonical may be the orders of its ministry, and however orthodox its doctrines, and Scriptural its forms of prayer, must have awfully departed, in practice, from original purity and simplicity, and therefore needs the reforming hand of some master spirit, some strong, primitive, and God-fearing apostolic successor, to bring it back to a primitive standard.

Let the reader associate in his mind the apostles and primitive saints. Let him imagine to himself that he lives in the days of the apostles, and that he is surrounded with those holy men of God who composed and adorned the first churches of Jesus Christ. Let him then suppose that a theatre is erected at Athens, filled and surrounded as one of our modern theatres is; do you think he would ever dream of seeing these apostles and their converts associating themselves with the actors and actresses, or with the hearers and supporters—for all hearers are supporters of theatres—and participating with them in their sports and plays—in their cups and gamblings! Heaven and hell are not more opposite than such a contrast. To mention the thing is to exhibit its perfect absurdity. An apostle a patronizer of theatres! The saints of God, in primitive days, attenders upon theatrical representations!

I conclude, therefore, that a church which vacillates on this subject has departed from the original church of Christ, and ought therefore to purify itself from all those unhallowed associations which lead to the continuance of a practice so pernicious in itself, and so destructive in its tendency.

NUMBER XXVIII.

The defence finished—Wesley led by Divine Providence—This evident from the Scriptural character of the church—Summary view of the system—1. Classes—2. Stewards—3. Quarterly meeting Conferences—4. Annual Conferences—5. General Conference. 6. Bishops—Book Concern—Missionary Society—Sabbath Schools, Academies and Colleges—Adaptation of the system to the condition of society—Though opposed, yet successful.

HAVING finished my defence of the orders and powers of the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, I hope it will not be considered out of place to make a few remarks upon what appears to me to be the gospel simplicity and beautiful symmetry of the whole machinery, and then to address a few words to the members of this church.

In the first place, however, I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude to God for the manner in which the founder of the system, the Rev. John Wesley, was so providentially led to its adoption. It has often been justly remarked, that when he commenced his ministerial career, which has eventuated in such great good to mankind, he had no previously digested plan, but was led on, step by step, as by an invisible Hand. His first determination was, after he had completed his education, to bury himself in the shades of Oxford. From this determination he departed when

he engaged, at the earnest solicitation of his friends and the governor of the colony, to embark for Georgia. His next step, after his return to England, and his conversion to God, was the formation of societies; then to field and itinerant preaching, the employment of lay preachers, and the formation of circuits, the calling of conferences, &c., &c. All these peculiarities were in some sense forced upon him, contrary to his wishes. What I mean by this is, that such were his attachments to the national church, that he reluctantly departed from any of her usages, and in no instance did he do it, until compelled from irresistible conviction that duty to God and to the souls of men called him to make the sacrifice. I have been struck with this truth more than ever since I commenced this discussion; and it has seemed to me remarkable that he should have been led in this way and manner to adopt measures so Scriptural, and to establish a church on principles so conformable to primitive usage and apostolic example, as those which we behold exemplified in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the government of this church we discover an admirable adaptation of means to ends, equally removed from congregational and presbyterial parity, and high-toned episcopacy; the former levelling all distinctions in the order of the clergy, and the other building up a hierarchy on a pretended apostolic succession, pleading for a third order in the ministry *jure divino*, without which there can be no valid ministry, and of course no gospel ordinances; while the Methodist Episcopal Church comes in between them both, equidistant from the levelling democracy of the one and the high claims of the other. Now, that Mr. Wesley should have been led, so contrary to all his notions of church

order, and all the principles of his education, to adopt a plan of procedure so easily defended by Scripture and primitive usage, is an evidence to my mind that he was conducted in these particulars by the hand of God, and under the light and guidance of that divine *Spirit which giveth understanding to man.* This, I think, has been abundantly manifest in the preceding numbers.

Let us now, that we may discover at one view the symmetry of the whole plan, glance at the different parts of the system. In the first place, there are the classes, consisting of from twelve to twenty members, under the inspection of leaders, who are responsible for their official conduct to the preacher from whom they receive their appointment. These meet together weekly for mutual edification and comfort, and to pay their weekly dues for the support of the poor and the ministry.

Secondly:—There are the stewards, who take charge of the class, quarterly, and sacramental collections, and disburse them to the poor and the ministry, and are responsible to the quarterly meeting conference, from which they receive their appointment, on the nomination of the preacher in charge of the circuit.

Thirdly:—There are the exhorters and local preachers, who, together with the leaders and stewards and travelling preachers on the circuit, compose the quarterly meeting conference, from which body exhorters and local preachers receive their license to officiate, and who recommend preachers to the annual conferences to be received into the travelling connection.

Fourthly:—There is the travelling ministry, consisting of licensed preachers, deacons, elders, and bishops;

and these compose the annual conferences, who have the power of receiving preachers, of trying their own members, of hearing appeals of local preachers, and of carrying into execution the rules of discipline, in relation to spreading the gospel by means of an itinerant ministry.

Fifthly:—The general conference, which assembles quadrennially, and is composed of a certain number of travelling elders, elected by the annual conferences. This is the highest ecclesiastical body known in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under certain restrictions which were imposed upon this delegated general conference at the time it was organized, in 1808, they have the power of revising the discipline, of electing the bishops, the editors and agents of the Book Concern, of hearing appeals from the decisions of annual conferences, and of reviewing the whole field of labor, whether it be included in the general work, or in the missionary department.

In the sixth place:—the bishops, who derive their official existence from the general conference, superintend the whole work, preside in the annual and general conferences, perform the ceremony of ordination, and appoint the preachers to their several stations.

In addition to this regular work, in which we behold a beautiful gradation of office and order, from the lowest to the highest, there is the book establishment, which has grown up with the growth of the church, and from which are issued a great variety of books on all branches of theological knowledge, suited to ministers of the gospel, including such as are suited to youth and children, as well as those for Sabbath schools, and a great number of tracts for gratuitous distribution by tract societies, Bibles and Testaments of various sizes, a

quarterly review, and weekly religious papers. This establishment is conducted by a suitable number of agents and editors, who are elected by the General Conference, to which body they are responsible for their official conduct, and, in the interval of the General, the New York Annual Conference exercises a supervision of this estimable and highly useful establishment.

In the last place, we may mention the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was organized in 1819, and has since spread itself, by means of auxiliary and branch societies, all over the United States and Territories, and, by means of its missionaries, has extended its operations among the aboriginal tribes of our wildernesses, among the descendants of Africa in the south, the new and poorer white settlements of our country, and also has sent its living heralds to Africa, to South America, and to the Oregon Territory. May its boundaries continually enlarge!

In the work of Sabbath schools, in the establishment of academies and colleges, though the latter have been but recently commenced with any thing like a determination to persevere, this church has taken an honorable stand among its sister denominations. It is to be hoped, nevertheless, that she will go forward in this noble work and praiseworthy enterprise, until she also shall send out her youthful sons and daughters to cultivate that intellectual and moral field which is now so widely spread out before us, and which is continually enlarging its boundaries, and inviting the entrance of faithful laborers.

This is a general outline of the system, the different parts of which have grown out of the exigencies of the

times, suiting itself to the mental, moral, and spiritual wants of men, and expanding itself so as to embrace the largest possible number of individuals as objects of its benevolence. I may well be suspected of partiality to a system, to the benign operation of which I am so much indebted, and which has exerted such a beneficial influence upon the best interests of mankind; but I cannot avoid thinking that I see in it that "perfection of beauty, out of which God hath shined," and that emanation of divine truth and light, which is destined, unless it should unhappily degenerate from its primitive beauty and simplicity "into a plant of a strange vine," and thus lose its original energy of character, to do its full share in enlightening and converting the world.

Though it has had to contend with the sneers of the infidel philosopher, with the taunts of the formalist, who trusted chiefly in that external designation to office which he flattered himself he had received by a regular succession from the apostles, as well as with those whose zeal or orthodoxy made them treat Wesleyan Methodism as a limb of antichrist, it has so far withstood the violent shocks of opposition from all these adverse powers, maintaining the integrity of its character, and pursuing the even tenor of its way, in quest of the grand object of its labors, which has been from the beginning, and I humbly hope will ever continue to be, the salvation of a lost world.

But my principal design in presenting this rough outline of the system was, that the reader might see the mutual dependence of its several parts upon each other, the true adjustment of its various laborers to their several offices and stations, as well as the responsibilities which grow out of the mutual relations which

each member and each officer holds to his fellow, to his superior, and to his inferior. I cannot, however, pursue this branch of the subject at present. Should Providence permit, I have a wish to address a few thoughts to the ministers and members of this church, by way of conclusion to what has been said. These must of course be reserved for a future time.

NUMBER XXIX.

Subordination of ministers one to the other—Duties of each ascertained by law—Rules of conduct and judgment—Sanctioned by Scripture—St. Paul's analogy taken from the human body—St. Peter's exhortation to the different grades in the ministry necessary to be observed—Private judgment—Individual rights limited—How far they must be sacrificed to secure conventional rights—New rights and privileges acquired by surrendering individual rights—Objections answered—Illustrated by the conduct of Luther—He surrendered his private judgment to the word of God—Province of private judgment—Doctrine applied to Methodist ministry—Their reciprocal duties and rights.

It is manifest that the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church recognizes a regular subordination among the several orders of the ministry, one to the other, requiring duties and conferring privileges peculiar to each; and that so long as these duties are performed with fidelity, the annexed privileges are freely and amply secured and enjoyed, and of course the whole system is kept in harmonious and successful operation. But, to prevent confusion on the one hand, and despotism on the other, the duties of each are prescribed, and the whole is surrounded with those constitutional restraints which limit the powers of each officer in the execution of his trust, as well as the

legislative enactments of the General Conference. There can, therefore, be no legalized despotism exercised in any department of the government; and even an *abuse* of power may be corrected by bringing the delinquent to the tribunal to which he is responsible for his official conduct. Thus the bishops are held accountable to the General Conference, where all their official acts pass in review every fourth year. The acts of the General Conference are tried by those restrictive regulations which define and limit their powers. The presiding elders, elders, deacons, and travelling preachers are held responsible to their respective annual conferences, where their characters are examined every year, the decisions of which are guided and determined by rules regularly laid down, and by usages of established authority. The local preachers, exhorters, and stewards are held accountable to the quarterly meeting conferences, where they pass in review once every year. The class leaders, who receive their office from the preacher in charge of the circuit or station, are responsible to him for their official conduct, who has power to remove them for any delinquency. The private members of the church are accountable for their moral and religious conduct to their brethren, before whom they are brought to answer for any alleged crime or neglect of duty.

In all these several departments regular tribunals are constituted, rules of judgment are laid down, and the whole process by which the supposed delinquent is to be tried, acquitted, or condemned, is clearly defined and prescribed; and, as far as is possible, in each case, he is tried by his peers, or those of the same standing with himself in the church.

Now, without pretending to say that every minutia of this economy can find an exact precept in Scripture for its support, or supposing that this is necessary to justify each prescribed form and usage, I think the whole outline is fully recognized and sanctioned by that high authority. Let the reader who wishes to see a general portrait of the character of the church drawn out by the pencil of inspiration, as one compact body made up of its several appropriate members,—and the necessity of each one's acting in its proper place, individually, and yet in harmony with its fellow members, consult the 12th chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, from the 4th to the 30th verse inclusive. Here will he see exemplified, in a most beautiful and appropriate analogy between the human body and the church, the mutual dependence of the several members of Christ's mystical body one upon another, and the absolute necessity for each one to submit to its station, and to perform its relative duties, in order to keep up the healthy action of the entire body, so as to accomplish the greatest amount of good, and to secure the perfect harmony of the system. As from the head the impetus proceeds which gives thought, animation, and action to every limb of the human body, so from Christ as the supreme Head of the church, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, spiritual life and energy are given to the several members of the church, by obeying the impulse of which they all move on, from "apostles, prophets, and teachers," to "helps and governments," and through all the minuter branches of this compact spiritual body, in a most beautiful and harmonious gradation, exhibiting, in this lively and energetic action, that perfection of beauty out of which God shines, and through

which he sheds the light of his glory to all the world around.

But for the more express command of God in respect to this sort of subordination in the several grades in the church, let the reader consult the following passage from St. Peter:—"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Here is manifestly prescribed the order which God has established for the well being of his church, and without the observance of which there can be no well-regulated society, no harmony of co-operation, and no efficient government. And the apostle intimates that those who resist this order, or that rise in rebellion against this subordination, exhibit that pride of heart which calls for resistance on the part of God: "for God resisteth the proud,' but giveth grace to the humble." As pride is distinguished by a rebellion against the constituted authorities of the church, and will meet with its merited punishment, so humility is no less distinguished by a proper submission to these authorities, and when thus exercised will meet with a gracious acceptance in the sight of God.

Here it may be expedient to stop with a view to obviate an objection which arises out of the doctrine of private judgment and individual rights. No man, I presume to think, values those rights and this judgment, more highly than I do; and yet I cannot but believe that both the one and the other have been misunderstood by many, and, as a consequence, perverted for base and selfish purposes.

This right of private judgment has been harped upon in a thoughtless manner, until every member of the community, almost every child who begins to think at all, has come to the conclusion, as erroneous as it is destructive to the peace of society, that he has a right to exercise his own private judgment in all things pertaining to himself and others, however opposite it may be to the expressed will of the majority, or to the decisions of the community to which he belongs. But is this so? Has each individual this right? I think not. It must, assuredly, be understood with many limitations, and in a qualified sense.

That every rational man has a right to think for himself, and to express his thoughts freely, is not disputed. And considered in an isolated capacity, as a simple individual, untrammelled by those laws originating from social relations, he has the right to the most perfect, the most unrestrained exercise of his private judgment. But the moment he enters into society he obliges himself to surrender a portion of his individual rights as a mere private citizen, in order to secure the privileges of a social being, a member of civil and religious society. So, whenever a man becomes a member of a church, he binds himself to abide by the doctrines and moral restraints of that church, and is no longer at liberty to exercise his

private judgment in opposition to its standards, and to those regulations by which ministers and members have bound themselves to be governed. If he has become convinced that there are errors in doctrine and discipline to which he cannot subscribe, his only alternative, if he cannot peaceably effect an alteration, is to declare his dissent and silently withdraw.

But in surrendering his private judgment, he receives more than an equivalent for the sacrifice he makes. In the first place, as he is a fallible being, and as such liable to err, he has the advantage of the united wisdom of many, perhaps all wiser than himself. By surrendering up his judgment, therefore, to the judgment of others, he is likely to gain much more than he loses, inasmuch as "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." But in becoming a member of a true church of Christ, he gains a thousand fold for the small sacrifice he makes. He is now brought within the covenant of his God, is entitled to all the privileges of the gospel, to those promises of pardon, protection, and consolation, which belong to none others, in that peculiar sense in which they belong to him and to all his fellow heirs of salvation. And he who thinks the sacrifice of his private judgment in respect to some things is too great to secure blessings of such inestimable value, has made too low an estimate of the privileges of church fellowship.

So also that minister who connects himself with the ministry of a Christian church, by that very act, agrees to surrender his right of private judgment to the dictates of those doctrines and rules of moral and religious conduct by which those ministers have agreed to regulate their faith and practice. Hence he is not

at liberty, so long as he remains associated with them, to interpose his individual judgment against the united decisions of the body. But what has he acquired? He has now the united counsel, the fellowship, and the privileges peculiar to the minister of the Lord Jesus. To retain these he cheerfully submits to the restraints of his situation, to the new duties arising from that subordination which is essential to the peace and harmony of the body to which he belongs, and to the honors and emoluments which are peculiar to the minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. To illustrate my meaning here:—In some states, a minister of the Lord Jesus is denied the privilege of being a member of the legislature, or of holding any civil office of honor and trust. And, in numerous instances, in times of high political excitement, a regard to the interests of the church which he serves induces him to deny himself the right of suffrage at the polls. Those rights which he enjoyed simply as a citizen, he cheerfully sacrifices, for the sake of securing others which he considers of much more value to him as a minister of the sanctuary, and which he can use to much more advantage to his fellow men. Now for these sacrifices he receives much more than an equivalent. Though disfranchised in respect to holding civil offices—a wise regulation in my opinion—he has the privilege of solemnizing matrimony, of burying the dead, of preaching the gospel of peace, of being exempt from military duty, and of serving as a juror, and, in some states, of paying taxes to a certain amount of property. In addition to these exemptions and privileges, he has the emoluments, such as they are, which indeed are small enough in the Methodist Church, connected with his office, and all the honor,

though sometimes mingled with reproach, generally paid to a devoted, upright, and laborious minister of Jesus Christ. To say nothing of those spiritual blessings which are connected with his high and holy office, and which always accompany his labors, these are privileges which by far overbalance any sacrifice which he is called to make in order to secure them.

The same remarks will apply to individual rights. As a mere human rational being, every man has the right, being held responsible to his God for his conduct, of dictating what he will do, of controlling himself in all things, of disposing of himself, and of his property—if indeed it can be said that he holds any in this state—as it may please him. But the moment he becomes a member of civil society he holds a different relation, and from this relation grow new laws, new duties, and new privileges. He must now submit to laws imposed by the majority, or by those to whom the power of legislation is delegated;—to those laws he is now pledged to submit, and for doing this he becomes entitled to privileges to which he had before no right. The same may be said in respect to all those who become members and ministers in a religious community. Some of their individual rights as citizens must be sacrificed, that they may enjoy others, far more valuable, indeed, which arise out of their new relation, as members and ministers of the church of Christ. This must be evident and plain to every reflecting mind, and therefore I need not enlarge upon it.

Against this view of the subject I anticipate some objections. It has frequently been said that we are indebted to the exercise of private judgment and individual rights for the lights and blessings of the

reformation. I doubt this. Let us examine it a little. Let us select Luther as our example. Was he guided in his holy and bold enterprise by the dictates of his own private judgment in the exercise of his individual rights? I think otherwise. Luther was a member of the church and of a civil community. He enjoyed therefore all the helps and privileges to be derived from his social relations. Guided by these helps, and prompted by a mind that had been enlarged and refined by an education for which he was indebted to the society in which he lived, he was led, by reading the New Testament, first to suspect the correctness of certain dogmas and practices of the Church of Rome. As he read on, and searched for himself, light poured into his mind, until he became thoroughly convinced of the errors of popery, and that it was his duty to renounce them at once and for ever. Was this the result of his own private judgment? By no means. He yielded his judgment, entirely and implicitly, to the will of God, as it was announced in his word. *This* now became the guide of his mind, and the rule of his decisions. Had he followed the dictates of his own judgment, unaided and unenlightened by the revelation of God's word and will, or in opposition to it, the lights of the reformation would never have been poured upon the world by his instrumentality. But by surrendering his understanding to the dictates of God's word, the pages of which were illuminated by that eternal *Spirit which garnisheth the heavens*, he was gradually conducted away from the errors and abominations of popery, and gently led into all the paths of gospel peace and simplicity.

But while I thus contend for a surrender of private judgment and individual rights in order to secure those

conventional rights which are far more valuable, there are certain limits within which private judgment is permitted to operate, and individual rights are held sacred. Every rational being has certain inalienable rights which he may not surrender, and a certain province within which he is not only at liberty to exercise his private judgment, but it is his indispensable duty so to do. Suppose, for instance, the doctrines, discipline, and usages of the Methodist Episcopal Church are presented to the consideration of an individual for his belief and acceptance—in their examination he must exercise his own private judgment, comparing them with the word of God and the light of reason. In doing this he acts on his own individual responsibility, as one who *must give an account of himself to God.* Having thus exercised himself in the use of those powers with which his Creator hath endued him, if he make up his judgment in favor of this discipline, and those doctrines and usages, he will feel himself impelled, from a conviction of truth and duty, to embrace them, and to make them the rule of his faith and practice ever after. He now enters into a new relation, comes under new obligations, and in return receives new privileges. He is no longer a simple citizen, enjoying the civil rights of his country, but he has become a member of a church, and, so far as respects the doctrines, discipline, and usages of that church, he is no longer at liberty to oppose his own individual rights and private judgments to the judgment and rights of the community into which he has entered, and by the laws of which he has promised to abide. Still, however, he exercises his own judgment, and avails himself of his personal rights, in every thing comprehended within

the circle of moral and religious duty not specifically prescribed as an article of faith or a rule of practice.

These remarks have been made to show the manner in which a conference of Methodist preachers are bound together, and are thereby brought under conventional obligations, to which they were exempt as citizens merely of this republic, and also simply as private members of the church. In order to secure the immunities of travelling ministers, to discharge, to the greatest possible advantage in their estimation, the functions of their office, and to entitle themselves to the singular privileges of ambassadors of Jesus Christ, they have agreed to surrender up certain individual rights which they possessed as citizens merely, or as private members of the church, and to pledge themselves to each other not to violate those conventional obligations under which they have reciprocally bound themselves as articles of faith, and rules of moral, religious, and ministerial duty. Against these they are not at liberty to speak, preach, or write. Nay, they are sacredly pledged, by the most solemn of all obligations, to defend, enforce, and practise them. And without the redemption of this pledge, by the observance of these duties, there can be no peace and union in the body, no harmonious action, nor any such co-operation as shall accomplish the end of their association. The only alternative is, if any one is convinced, by a prayerful attention to his duties, that he is in an error—that the system is wrong—or that any one part of it needs alteration—after having failed in a constitutional effort to correct the error,—to improve the system, or to produce the change—to assign his reasons for his dissent, and quietly withdraw. If he think his own

private judgment superior to the united judgment of his brethren, and that his individual rights as a citizen are preferable, more valuable to him than those conventional rights which grow out of his social and ministerial relation, he must abandon the latter in order to secure the former. But a man ought to ponder long upon his ways, to deliberate calmly and dispassionately, before he comes to the solemn conclusion, that he will throw away the rights he has acquired as a minister of Christ, abandon his privileges, and forfeit all his spiritual and temporal immunities, in order to enjoy the simple rights and privileges of a private citizen, or of an individual minister, cut off from the communion of his brethren. Such a sacrifice, I apprehend, will be found much greater than the one he made when he entered the itinerant field, and became a member of the association.

NUMBER XXX.

Sources of danger to the church—How to guard against them—Purity and clearness of her doctrines to be adhered to—Discipline enforced—The itinerancy preserved—The grand *end* of Methodism—The salvation of the world to be kept in view—How this may be kept or lost—Mere speculations must be avoided, and duty performed.

HAVING completed what I have to say in respect to the organization, orders, and powers of the ministry, I beg permission to address a few thoughts to the ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In doing this, I desire to speak with that deference to the judgment of others which becomes one who has but little to claim in point of seniority, and much less in respect to learning and experience.

I speak merely as a friend who wishes well to our beloved Zion, and who ardently prays for her peace and prosperity.

If there be any weight in the testimonies and arguments which have been adduced in the preceding numbers, we need have no fear from the assaults of our adversaries in respect to the stability of our institutions, so long as we are faithful to our trust in guarding the sacred deposit committed to our care by our fathers, and in improving upon the privileges to which we have been exalted. The danger lies "in departing from the living God"—in confiding more in men and means than we do in Him who has "called us to glory and virtue"—and in suffering ourselves to be carried away in the current of popular errors, or to be ingulfed in the riches and honors of this world.

1. In the first place, I presume to think that no people, since the apostolic days, have been blessed with such clear expositions of gospel truth as we have been. Those whom God honored as the instruments of establishing our church were not *ignorant* men. They were, in every sense of the word, *wise* and *learned.* But, in addition to this, they were eminently *pious.* They had a deep and genuine experience in the things of God, having them sealed upon their consciences by the Holy Ghost. Whenever, therefore, they spoke, they spoke of the "things which they had felt and seen."

Where else, in any human writings, will you find such clear and able expositions and defences of the doctrine of human depravity, the nature and necessity of repentance, justification by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, the witness and fruits of the Spirit, the doctrine of holiness of heart and life, and the ne-

cessity of persevering in every good word and work, as are found in the writings of Wesley and Fletcher, and of many other Wesleyan Methodists who might be mentioned? In the sermons and tracts of Wesley, in the hymns published by him and his brother, in the writings of Fletcher, Benson, Clarke, and others, not only the above doctrines are set forth and defended with a perspicuity and energy seldom if ever equalled in any human compositions, but also the proper Deity of Christ, the attributes of God, his law and government, the dispensations of his providence and grace, and all those collateral truths which grow out of the cardinal principles of divine revelation, whether they relate to our duty to God or man, are illustrated in a language peculiarly plain and pointed, so that he who runs may read and understand. In the writings of Wesley especially—for I greatly prefer his to all others—the reader is led, almost whether he will or no, to an examination of his own heart, to an inspection of his life, and, if he be not hardened beyond recovery, to a loathing of himself before God; nor will he, if he follow his convictions, allow himself to rest until he surrenders himself a willing captive to that truth with which his mind has become enlightened and his heart affected.

To these doctrines, therefore, I would say, *adhere*. In respect to these, we have only to inquire for the "old paths," and to "walk therein," in order to "find rest to our souls."

2. In the second place, look at that moral discipline which has been handed down to us from the same source. "The General Rules of the United Societies" contain, in a few well-chosen sentences, all those rules of moral and religious conduct which are

requisite to guide us into the "paths of peace and righteousness." I rejoice that these are declared, by the restrictive regulations which limit the powers of the General Conference, unalterable; for I am well convinced that they never can be altered for the better, nor emended so as to make them more intelligible, except it be to restore one item, which has been altered for the worse, to that state in which Wesley left it—I mean that respecting *drunkenness*. So long as we adhere to those doctrines, and conform our lives to these rules, I cannot see any reason for "error in doctrine, or viciousness in life."

3. The method of propagating these doctrines and enforcing these rules, by an itinerant ministry, with all those auxiliaries afforded us by class leaders, stewards, exhorters, and local preachers, is admirably adapted to give a diffusive spread to the gospel of God our Saviour, and to build up the people in holy living. This method of preaching the gospel, of establishing and regulating the societies, gave origin to certain regulations somewhat peculiar to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and which are necessary to be observed in order to keep the whole system in motion, so as to preserve the harmonious action of its several parts. And in the extension of the work, it has been found expedient so to modify some of those external features of the system as to meet the exigencies of the times, and take advantage of the improvements of the age, and to reach the greatest possible portion of mankind with the benign influences of religion. These appendages, which have grown out of the circumstances of the times, so far from touching any of the vital principles of the system, are only calculated to give them a wider expansion, to diffuse them abroad with

greater energy, and to maintain them with more force and permanency. Thus the enlargement of our work, the increase of our Book Establishment, the introduction of periodical literature, the ingrafting upon the parent stock the Missionary Society, the founding and maintaining academies and colleges, have created a necessity for new regulations, in order to sustain all these institutions, and to carry them forward with energy and success. The flourishing state of these branches shows that the vital principle in the original trunk is by no means exhausted, but that, being "rooted and grounded" in a prolific soil, and watered continually by the "dew of heaven," it is constantly enlarging its dimensions, multiplying its branches, and yet so supported as to be able to withstand the shocks of every adverse wind.

Indeed, the grand principle of Methodism from the beginning was, to lay fast hold of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, with a determination never to unloose the hold, and then to adopt all those means to diffuse them among mankind, which the developments of time and circumstances should dictate to be necessary and expedient. On this principle it has ever acted. Whoever will read its history with attention, will perceive this principle unfolding itself in every step of its progress, from the time its original germ began to shoot forth in Oxford, down to the death of its founder. And it is only by following out this same principle, holding fast the grand doctrines of Christ as immutable, and at the same time embracing every opening of Providence for its extension, by the adoption and use of all those means which are sanctioned by the word of God, that the greatest amount of good can be fully realized.

Under the firm conviction that God has signally owned and blessed this system, it is affectionately urged upon all concerned to hold it fast, and to yield to no temptation to sacrifice any of its principles to please the world or to gratify the caprice or whims of any party of men; and, at the same time, to embrace every opportunity, and to adopt every lawful means, for extending its influence among the apostate sons of men.

The grand end which Wesley proposed in all his labors was the salvation of sinners. To accomplish this he sacrificed his prejudices, his ease, his worldly prospects, and devoted his time and talents entirely and exclusively to the *work of God.* This was his one work. Whatever means he thought, after mature and prayerful deliberation, would conduce to the attainment of this end, he adopted, and applied himself to their use with all his might. Whether he read, preached, or prayed—whether he established classes, formed circuits, employed lay-preachers, called conferences, printed books, collected money, or founded a school, all were enlisted in this grand cause, and made tributary to the attainment of his primary object —*the salvation of the world.* And hence whatever retarded him in this course, or tended to defeat his main design, he rejected, let the sacrifice be ever so costly.

It was on the same principle that he was led, so contrary to his first determination, to adopt measures for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in this country. He saw, as with a prophetic eye, a rising country, filling up with inhabitants, and teeming with immortal souls who needed the bread of life, and the ordinances of the gospel. To provide these in

due time, he sacrificed his prepossessions in favor of the legal establishment, to which he was wedded, and exerted himself in the organization of a church, according to the principles, and under the circumstances heretofore explained. In doing this, his mind was not dazzled with the false glare of worldly honors, fame, or temporal aggrandizement, but acted under the impulses of the same heart which always panted for the present and future happiness of mankind. *This was the man, and this was his work.* And what have we to do but to follow in his steps? This, indeed, is the very thing which I would urge upon myself and all my readers. So long as we keep this one object in view, to promote holiness in ourselves and others, we may expect the blessing of God to accompany our labors. But if we turn aside from this, our "fine gold will become dim," and "all our pleasant things" will be changed into bitterness.

We have seen, in the preceding numbers, that the organization of our church, and the manner of ordaining our ministry, are easily defensible by Scriptural arguments. But if we should lose our spirituality, and sink into a spirit of lukewarmness, God will write *Ichabod* upon all our borders, because the glory will then have departed from us. In that case, we might in vain plead that we have had Wesley for our founder. Like the Jews, we might glory in the wisdom and piety of our fathers in the church, while we ourselves may have become as "whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones." It is essential, therefore, for the preservation of our spirituality, that our motives be kept pure, and that our "single eye" be constantly fixed on the great end of our calling, which is the salvation of a lost world. And that such

a system as ours may be kept in harmonious and vigorous action, continual sacrifices must be made, particularly by the members of our conferences, of individual interests, of personal ease and accommodation, as well as of a pecuniary nature. Mutual concessions of judgment must be made, reciprocal rights exchanged, and a constant exercise of that fraternal feeling which enables us to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the royal law." It has been by the voluntary and cheerful sacrifices of this character, that the system has been hitherto preserved in peace and purity, and that the amount of good has been realized which is now so evident to every observing mind.

Let us, therefore, endeavor to be "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord." With the speculations on new doctrines and theories we have nothing to do. We may indeed be *led* by Divine Providence into new fields of labor: but if we would labor successfully, it must be with the well-tried means with which we have heretofore been so much blessed. The inventors of new theories, and the innovators upon established doctrines and usages, have "spent their strength for naught," while the true sons of Wesley have "gone forth," it may be "weeping," but have returned "with joy, bringing their sheaves with them." The wide world is before us, and with the word of God in our hands, and its Wesleyan expositions by its side, provided we are animated and strengthened by that eternal Spirit which *garnished the heavens*, we may go on from *conquering to conquer*, until the "kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ."

NUMBER XXXI.

God's design in raising up the Methodists—To spread holiness—This object should be kept in view—Faith, experience, and obedience must be united—This the end of the Christian ministry—Such a ministry must be supported—The people exhorted to liberality in support of Missionary, Bible, Tract, Sunday School, and Literary Institutions—Liberality essential to prevent the deleterious effects of riches—An expansive benevolence consistent with a zealous attachment to our own peculiarities—Difference between a love of sect and sectarianism—How exemplified—Exhortation to a catholic, liberal, and steadfast conduct.

With a few words to the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, I shall bring these numbers to a close. That God has wrought wonders for us as a people, no one who is at all acquainted with our history, and acknowledges at the same time that he does now work upon the hearts of men, will be disposed to question. The first heralds of Methodism went "out into the highways and hedges," and became instrumental in raising up those who "were no people to become the people of God." And we have seen that the simple object of forming them into societies, was to raise a *holy people.* To form a sect never entered into the thoughts of Wesley at the commencement of his ministry, nor any of his coadjutors. It was not from a dissatisfaction with the organization of the church to which he belonged that Wesley was led forth into that field of labor of which he became such a distinguished cultivator. It was a dissatisfaction *with himself.* As he says, he began by *condemning himself.* And having passed sentence of condemnation upon himself, he set about the work of reforming his own heart and life. Having, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, effected this great work, his next object was to reform others from the error of their

ways. I say from the *error of their ways*; for when he commenced his evangelical ministry, it was not so much with a view to reform men's *opinions* in theology, as it was to reform their *hearts* and *lives*, and thus to bring them to the obedience of Jesus Christ. That he was afterward led into a discussion of doctrinal truths, was a result which arose incidentally out of his course by the adverse conduct of his enemies, instead of its entering into his primary and main design. Hence the experimental and practical bearing of all his writings, his controversial not excepted.

Now, what I wish is, to impress upon all the importance of keeping this object constantly before our minds. It is, to be sure, important that our creed should be orthodox. It is not without reason that God has taken such special pains to reveal to us the truths which we are called upon to believe. No man, I think, who duly appreciates the volume of divine revelation, will say that it is a matter of indifference whether or not he believe in the Divinity of Christ, and in the atonement which he made for the sins of the world, the necessity of repentance and regeneration; because a man's practice is always influenced in a greater or lesser degree by his faith; but that which is not less important than the above is a full belief in those truths which have a direct bearing upon our experience and practice. Whatever a man believes theoretically, unless he be made a partaker of the grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ, he cannot be saved. And whatever he may profess to experience, however high may be his raptures or loud his professions, unless he bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, and prove the soundness of his experience by keeping the commandments of God, we have a right

to conclude that he has deceived himself. Nor will sincerity excuse him. This, to be sure, will exempt him from the condemnation and disgrace of a hypocrite: but it will not atone for a deficiency in his religious experience and practice. It may be a plea in favor of his being in the way which *leads* to spiritual life; but it cannot serve as a substitute for that holiness of heart and life which is essential to constitute the Christian character, and which alone qualifies a man for the pure enjoyments of heaven.

Whatever, therefore, may be the soundness with which we may vindicate our claims to the gospel ministry, unless that ministry be made subservient to the attainment of these ends, it will prove but a "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." This, indeed, has been the professed object of this ministry from the beginning; and while it continues to be such in reality, it may expect the blessing of God upon its labors, and no longer.

If, however, I have succeeded in vindicating the claims of this ministry to a Divine call; if it give evidence of possessing those qualifications which are essential to the character of a divinely instituted ministry; then it becomes the people to whom they are sent to receive them as the ambassadors of God, and to give them all the support which is needful to enable them to follow their calling without worldly embarrassment. It is allowed that it is the duty of all ministers of Jesus Christ to devote themselves without reserve to their peculiar work. But those who do this cannot attend to those secular concerns which are necessary to procure a temporal livelihood. They must therefore be dependent on the people to whom they administer "in spiritual things" for those

"carnal things" which they, equally with all others, need for the support of themselves and their families.

This is peculiarly necessary for an itinerant ministry. Whatever might be the disposition, it is certain that neither the ability nor opportunity exists for such a ministry to attend to a farming, mechanical, mercantile, or any other profession, in order to procure a livelihood. Their very calling, therefore, precludes the uniting of secular business with it, without destroying its peculiar character, and of course its usefulness.

In perfect conformity to these views, the framers of that part of our Discipline which relates to our temporal economy have advised the building of parsonages, and of providing them with heavy furniture, that whenever a preacher is moved from one circuit to another, he may have as little to burden him in his removal as possible. Though this requisition is partially attended to in some places, yet its entire neglect in most others is one of the most serious impediments in the way of an itinerant ministry, and must, unless the evil be remedied, very much retard, if it do not entirely stop, the wheels of the itinerancy. Economy itself would dictate the utility of adopting this policy. The expense of moving furniture from one place to another, the injury it must necessarily suffer by such removals, would soon meet the entire expense of purchasing those articles which are of permanent use, and most burdensome to remove. Were convenient houses furnished in every circuit and station, and these provided with heavy furniture, the changes of preachers from one place to another would be comparatively light and easy, and more especially so, were a competent provision made for their support.

It is manifest that in all the great enterprises of the day, the hearty co-operation of the membership of the church is essential to their success. It is a pleasing thought that these have sprung up as fruits of that benevolence which the gospel inspires. Since the great revival of true godliness which commenced early in the eighteenth century under the labors of Wesley and his coadjutors, all those institutions of benevolence, Missionary, Bible, Tract, and Sunday school societies, have come into existence, and are now exerting, through the united labors of the several denominations of Christians, their saving and hallowing influences upon the community. These must be carried forward, not as substitutes for that gospel which is their parent, but as its dutiful sons and daughters, and as powerful auxiliaries to the "ministry of reconciliation." These, together with those seminaries of learning which are designed for training our youth in literature and science, need the united energies of preachers and people to keep them in successful operation, to enlarge their boundaries and capabilities of usefulness, and give them that elevated character and permanent foundation which will secure for them the public confidence, and perpetuate their standing and means of doing good to the present and future generations.

Let no one say that this is imposing too heavy burdens upon the people. They need no such apology. The spirit of the world, the desire of riches, the love of splendor, and a covetous disposition, are more likely to betray us into a forgetfulness of God, to loosen our sense of obligation to him, and to weaken the force of moral and religious principle, than the spirit of benevolence is to impair our perceptions of the claims of justice, or to diminish our means of doing

good to the souls and bodies of men, or of bringing that poverty which is the poor man's destruction.

The fact is, that the Methodists are in more danger, at the present time, of being corrupted by riches, than they are of being impoverished by acts of benevolence. In common with others in our country, where industry and economy are contributing to increase their worldly substance, the Methodists are becoming more and more wealthy, and are thereby in equal danger with others of being swallowed up "with the cares and riches of this world." It may therefore be considered a mercy to the church, that avenues for more extensive usefulness are opening before us, to drain off our superfluous wealth, that it may not be a means of leading us "into divers snares and temptations, which drown the soul in perdition." The wise man has said, "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." And the inspired writers all along speak of riches, under a deep conviction of their corrupting influence upon the morals of mankind, and of their deteriorating effects upon the spiritual health of the soul, declaring, most plainly and pointedly, that they "eat as doth a canker," and that they naturally tend to induce men who have much of earthly treasure to set their hearts upon it as their chief good.

And yet pure religion naturally leads to wealth. By inspiring a spirit of industry and economy, leading to a retrenchment of all extravagance in living, unless the religious man have some outlet for his surplus wealth, he must hoard it up for "those who come after him, whether they be wise men or fools." Unless, therefore, this man give in proportion to the increase of his property, his riches will eat out his religion, and thus destroy its own existence by the

very means it furnishes its disciples with to accumulate wealth. Hence, to prevent such a catastrophe, its precepts are every way consistent with its own character, that *the rich are to remember the poor*, whom they *have always with them*. Indeed, it is only by complying with this divine command, by *dispersing abroad and giving to the poor*, that pure religion can be preserved in the heart of him who increases in wealth and abounds in the good things of this world. He must use this wealth to the glory of its Giver, by contributing to advance His cause in the earth.

Here, then, is one way of preserving ourselves as a church from apostatizing from purity and spirituality. By means of our ministry God has raised up a numerous people, spread over the length and breadth of the land. That religion which they have embraced, by teaching them industry and economy, has enabled many of them to become wealthy. God has also opened before us a wide door for extended usefulness, among the poorer settlements of our country, among the savages of our wildernesses, and in foreign lands. Here is a loud call upon them for an exercise of their charity. Here, indeed, is ample room and an imperious demand for the application, in the best possible way, of those temporal means with which the God of providence and grace hath intrusted them. Let all those therefore who love God, and are sighing and praying for the salvation of the world, after supplying their own wants, pour their surplus revenue into the Lord's treasury, that those waste and dreary deserts may be cultivated, and be made to *blossom as the rose*. We have indeed abundant reason to thank God that this spirit of benevolence, so characteristic of the Christian, and

so necessary to keep up and extend the Redeemer's kingdom, has been strikingly manifested in the conduct of many of our brethren and friends. Thousands of heathen have already "praised God for the consolation" sent unto them by the united exertions of the missionary and his supporters. Only let the good work go on, increase, and spread, and the world shall soon be full of the knowledge of God.

The same remarks will apply to our literary, as well as to all our domestic institutions. These are instituted, I verily believe, under the call of Providence, not only for the benefit of the youth who are therein educated and trained, but also that our people might have a "place where to bestow their goods," and thereby save themselves from that moral contamination which riches, improperly applied, naturally induce. What a vast amount of good may those do to themselves and to future generations who have wealth at their command! Let them "make to themselves friends with this mammon of unrighteousness," and then, instead of its proving a curse by its abuse, it will become a means of enlarging their own hearts, of exciting a spirit of sympathy for the poor, of sending the gospel to the destitute, and of training up youth for future usefulness in the church and in the world.

It may, perhaps, be said by some, that these numbers are sectarian in their character, and therefore cannot be productive of that generous and expansive benevolence which the gospel of Jesus Christ inspires. To this I would answer, that though they are designed to vindicate a sect, they are by no means sectarian. If, in vindicating the sect whose cause they plead, and whose ministry they have at-

tempted to defend, they had condemned all others as spurious, schismatical, or heretical, they would be justly chargeable with sectarianism. This, however, they have scrupulously and most conscientiously avoided. Without presuming to call in question the validity of the ministry of other churches, to deny their orthodoxy, or to impeach their character as Christians, they have aimed simply to justify the proceedings of a much abused man of God, and of that ministry which he was instrumental in establishing. They are therefore purely defensive, so far as these points are concerned; and if, in the course of the discussion, some animadversions have been made upon the practices of the church whose writers have called forth this defence, they have arisen from the necessity the author felt to be faithful in all things according to his best judgment, and not from an indulgence of that exclusive spirit which condemns all others except his own.

Had, indeed, these numbers assumed the high ground that the ministrations of all other denominations were spurious, because their ministers had not been called and consecrated according to our views of canonical order, there might be just reason for accusing them of an exceptionable sectarianism. But they have been very far from setting up this Procrustean bed, and requiring all others to stretch or shorten themselves to its length, in order to entitle themselves to enjoy its benefits. Their object has been, not to condemn others, but to defend ourselves. We may see therefore the difference between advocating the claims of a sect, and a sectarian exclusiveness. While the former is perfectly compatible with the liberal spirit of Christianity, the

latter diminishes its peculiar glory, and settles down into a selfish bigotry, which saith to all others, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou."

In pleading, therefore, for a conformity to our doctrines and discipline, and for a generous and hearty support of our religious and literary institutions, we do not utter any proscriptions against those who may dissent from us, or who may even condemn us as schismatics and as intruders into the fold of Christ. We only say, *If they are Israelites, so are we.* If they are zealous for God, and are striving to spread abroad his "saving health among all nations," we presume to think that we will not be a whit behind them in this respect. And while we most heartily wish them "God speed" in every evangelical effort they may make to increase the amount of human happiness, we are solicitous to share in the honor of contributing our quota in "subduing the world to the obedience of Christ."

I know that we have been often accused of indulging in sectarian bigotry, because we have presumed to defend ourselves when assailed by others. But is this just? A man strikes me over the head, throws me upon the ground, and then endeavors to cover me over with dirt and mud, and merely because I attempt to arise and shake myself from the dirt, he cries out that I am bigotedly attached to myself; and then, if I venture to complain of such rude conduct, I am censured as a disturber of the peace, and should not be tolerated. Is this fair play? Who, in this case, ought to be censured? And shall we be condemned as bigoted sectarists merely because we endeavor to defend ourselves against the rude assaults of our antagonists? We set up no exclusive

claims. We believe, indeed, that God has made the Methodists, unworthy as they may be, instruments of reviving and spreading pure Christianity among mankind. We believe that the evangelical labors of Wesley, his coadjutors and followers, "have provoked very many" "to love and good works," and that thereby gospel light, love, and holiness have been extensively diffused among the different orders of Christians; and we are anxious that the same enlightened zeal, the same ardor of piety, and the same labor of love and active benevolence, should still distinguish us as a people; that the "lust of the eye and the pride of life" may not impede our progress in our career of usefulness. With all those who are engaged in the solemn work of converting the world to Jesus Christ, we wish most heartily to co-operate, that we may unitedly carry on the warfare against the "world, the flesh, and the devil."

To conclude:—It is the wish of the present writer, that, while we rally around our own standards, maintain our own peculiarities, and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints," as we understand it, we should needlessly give offence to none, but confirm our love toward all men. It is possible, I think, to cleave to our own institutions, and yet exercise a catholic spirit toward all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is possible, indeed, to rise to that height in Christian experience, to be so absorbed in the spirit of divine love, and so ardently drawn forth in quest of immortal souls, as to lose sight of sectarian differences and partialities, and to be wholly taken up in the more paramount interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. And why should we not be so entirely devoted

to the *weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and the love of God,* as to be able to adopt the following language of a very elegant writer, who, though of doubtful principles as a Christian, often let fall some important thoughts as a moralist:—"The differences of Christian communities," says this writer, "cannot be felt at that height which is above all the accidental forms created and destroyed by time." Whether the Christian world will ever ascend to so elevated a stand in religious enjoyment as not to feel the influence of those "accidental forms created" by sectarian peculiarities or not, it certainly is worthy of an effort to strive to soften their asperities, that if they must come in collision, it may only tend to make each other take a finer polish, that they may hereafter shine the brighter, and reflect more clearly their borrowed rays from the *Sun of righteousness.*

While, therefore, the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church are exhorted to exercise a catholic spirit toward all Christian denominations, there is no inconsistency in urging them to a liberal support of their own institutions, that they may be sustained in all their youthful vigor, and carried forward to the greatest possible extent of usefulness. Let them then hold fast their doctrines, keep and enforce their discipline, yield a hearty support to their itinerant ministry, love and cherish their benevolent and literary institutions, and do good unto all men as they have opportunity, and the "God of love and peace shall be with them."

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